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HINDLE WAKES

A PLAY

By STANLEY
HOUGHTON





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HINDLE WAKES

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HINDLE WAKES

A Play in Three Acts, by
STANLEY HOUGHTON



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HINDLE WAKES was first produced by Miss HORNIMAN'S REPERTORY COMPANY from the Gaiety Theatre, Manchester, before the Incorporated Stage Society, at the Aldwych Theatre, on Sunday, June 16th, 1912, with the following cast:—

Mrs. Hawthorn . . .	ADA KING
Christopher Hawthorn .	CHARLES BIBBY
Fanny Hawthorn . . .	EDYTH GOODALL
Mrs. Jeffcote . . .	DAISY ENGLAND
Nathaniel Jeffcote . .	HERBERT LOMAS
Alan Jeffcote . . .	J. V. BRYANT
Sir Timothy Farrar . .	EDWARD LANDOR
Beatrice Farrar . . .	SYBIL THORNDIKE
Ada	HILDA DAVIES

The Play produced by LEWIS CASSON

CHARACTERS

CHRISTOPHER HAWTHORN, a Slasher at Daisy Bank
Mill

MRS. HAWTHORN, his Wife

FANNY HAWTHORN, their Daughter, a Weaver at
Daisy Bank Mill

NATHANIEL JEFFCOTE, Owner of Daisy Bank Mill

MRS. JEFFCOTE, his Wife

ALAN JEFFCOTE, their Son

SIR TIMOTHY FARRAR, Chairman of the Education
Committee at Hindle

BEATRICE FARRAR, his Daughter

ADA, Maid at Bank Top

SCENES

ACT I.—Scene 1. Kitchen of the Hawthorns' house
137, Burnley Road, Hindle.
Bank Holiday, Monday, August
6th. 9 p.m.

Scene 2. Breakfast-room of the Jeffcotes'
house, Bank Top, Hindle Vale,
The same night. 10.30 p.m.

Scene 3. Breakfast-room at the Jeffcotes'.
The same night. 1 a.m.

ACT II. Breakfast-room at the Jeffcotes'. Tuesday,
August 7th. 8 p.m.

ACT III. Breakfast-room at the Jeffcotes'. Tuesday,
August 7th. 9 p.m.

NOTE.—The scene for Act I., Scene 1, should be very small, as a contrast to the room at the Jeffcotes'. It might well be set inside the other scene so as to facilitate the quick change between Scenes 1 and 2, Act I.

NOTE ON THE LANCASHIRE DIALECT

This play is about Lancashire people. In the smaller Lancashire towns it is quite usual for well-to-do persons, and for persons who have received good educations at grammar schools and technical schools, to drop more or less into dialect when familiar, or when excited, or to point a joke. It is even usual for them to mix their speech with perfect naturalness. "You" and "thou" may jostle one another in the same sentence, as, for instance: "You can't catch it, I tell thee." As a general rule they will miss out a good many "h's," and will pronounce vowels with an open or flat sound. The final consonants will usually be clipped. At the same time it is unnecessary laboriously to adopt any elaborate or fearsome method of pronunciation. The Lancashire dialect of to-day—except amongst the roughest class in the most out-of-the-way districts—has had many of its corners rubbed off. It varies in its accents, too, in each separate town, that it may be attempted with impunity by all save the most incompetent. The poorest attempt will probably be good enough to pass muster as "Manchester," which has hardly a special accent of its own, but boasts a tongue composed of all the other Lancashire dialects mixed up, polished and made politer, and deprived of their raciness.

HINDLE WAKES

ACT I

SCENE 1

The scene is triangular, representing a corner of the living-room kitchen of No. 137, Burnley Road, Hindle, a house rented at about 7s. 6d. a week. In the left-hand wall, low down, there is a door leading to the scullery. In the same wall, but further away from the spectator, is a window looking on to the backyard. A dresser stands in front of the window. About half-way up the right-hand wall is the door leading to the hall or passage. Nearer, against the same wall, a high cupboard for china and crockery. The fireplace is not visible, being in one of the walls not represented. However, down in the L. corner of the stage is an arm-chair, which stands by the hearth. In the middle of the room is a square table, with chairs on each side. The room is cheerful and comfortable. It is nine o'clock on a warm August evening. Through the window can be seen the darkening sky, as the blind is not drawn. Against the sky an outline

of roof-tops and mill chimneys. The only light is the dim twilight from the open window. Thunder is in the air. When the curtain rises CHRISTOPHER HAWTHORN, a decent, white-bearded man of nearly sixty, is sitting in the arm-chair smoking a pipe. MRS. HAWTHORN, a keen, sharp-faced woman of fifty-five, is standing gazing out of the window. *There is a flash of lightning and a rumble of thunder far away.*

MRS. HAWTHORN. It's passing over. There'll be no rain.

CHRISTOPHER. Ay! We could do with some rain.

[There is a flash of lightning.]

CHRISTOPHER. Pull down the blind and light the gas.

MRS. HAWTHORN. What for?

CHRISTOPHER. It's more cosy-like with the gas.

MRS. HAWTHORN. You're not afraid of the lightning?

CHRISTOPHER. I want to look at that railway guide.

MRS. HAWTHORN. What's the good? We've looked at it twice already. There's no train from Blackpool till five-past ten, and it's only just on nine now.

CHRISTOPHER. Happen we've made a mistake.

MRS. HAWTHORN. Happen we've not. Besides, what's the good of a railway guide? You know trains run as they like on Bank Holiday.

CHRISTOPHER. Ay! Perhaps you're right. You don't think she'll come round by Manchester?

MRS. HAWTHORN. What would she be doing coming round by Manchester?

CHRISTOPHER. You can get that road from Blackpool.

MRS. HAWTHORN. Yes. If she's coming from Blackpool.

CHRISTOPHER. Have you thought she may not come at all?

MRS. HAWTHORN [*grimly*]. What do you take me for?

CHRISTOPHER. You never hinted.

MRS. HAWTHORN. No use putting them sort of ideas into your head.

[*Another flash and a peal of thunder.*]

CHRISTOPHER. Well, well, those are lucky who haven't to travel at all on Bank Holiday.

MRS. HAWTHORN. Unless they've got a motor-car, like Nat Jeffcote's lad.

CHRISTOPHER. Nay. *He's* not got one.

MRS. HAWTHORN. What? Why, I saw him with my own eyes setting out in it last Saturday week after the mill shut.

CHRISTOPHER. Ay! He's gone off these Wakes with his pal George Ramsbottom. A couple of thick beggars, those two!

MRS. HAWTHORN. Then what do you mean telling me he's not got a motor-car?

CHRISTOPHER. I said he hadn't got one of his own. It's his father's. You don't catch Nat Jeffcote parting with owt before his time. That's how he holds his lad in check, as you might say.

MRS. HAWTHORN. Alan Jeffcote's seldom short of cash. He spends plenty.

CHRISTOPHER. Ay! Nat gives him what he asks for, and doesn't want to know how he spends it either. But he's *got* to ask for it first. Nat can stop supplies any time if he's a mind.

MRS. HAWTHORN. That's likely, isn't it?

CHRISTOPHER. Queerer things have happened. You don't know Nat like I do. He's a bad one to get across with.

[Another flash and gentle peal. MRS.

HAWTHORN gets up.

MRS. HAWTHORN. I'll light the gas.

[She pulls down the blind and lights the gas.

CHRISTOPHER. When I met Nat this morning he told me that Alan had telegraphed from Llandudno on Saturday asking for twenty pounds.

MRS. HAWTHORN. From Llandudno?

CHRISTOPHER. Ay! Reckon he's been stopping there. Run short of brass.

MRS. HAWTHORN. And did he send it?

CHRISTOPHER. Of course he sent it. Nat doesn't stint the lad. *[He laughs quietly.]* Eh, but he *can* get through it, though!

MRS. HAWTHORN. Look here. What are you going to say to Fanny when she comes?

CHRISTOPHER. Ask her where she's been.

MRS. HAWTHORN. Ask her where she's been! Of course we'll do that. But suppose she won't tell us?

CHRISTOPHER. She's always been a good girl.

MRS. HAWTHORN. She's always gone her own road. Suppose she tells us to mind our own business?

CHRISTOPHER. I reckon it *is* my business to know what she's been up to.

MRS. HAWTHORN. Don't you forget it. And don't let her forget it either. If you do I promise you I won't!

CHRISTOPHER. All right. Where's that post-card?

MRS. HAWTHORN. Little good taking heed of that.

[CHRISTOPHER *rises and gets a picture postcard from the dresser.*

CHRISTOPHER [*reading*]. "Shall be home before late on Monday. Lovely weather." [*Looking at the picture.*] North Pier, Blackpool. Very like, too.

MRS. HAWTHORN [*suddenly*]. Let's have a look. When was it posted?

CHRISTOPHER. It's dated Sunday.

MRS. HAWTHORN. That's nowt to go by. Anyone can put the wrong date. What's the post-mark? [*She scrutinises it.*] "August 5th, summat p.m." I can't make out the time.

CHRISTOPHER. August 5th. That was yesterday, all right. There'd only be one post on Sunday.

MRS. HAWTHORN. Then she was in Blackpool up to yesterday, that's certain.

CHRISTOPHER. Ay!

MRS. HAWTHORN. Well, it's a mystery.

CHRISTOPHER [*shaking his head*]. Or summat worse.

MRS. HAWTHORN. Eh? You don't think *that*, eh?

CHRISTOPHER. I don't know what to think.

MRS. HAWTHORN. Nor me neither.

[They sit silent for a time. There is a rumble of thunder, far away. After it has died away a knock is heard at the front door. They turn and look at each other. MRS. HAWTHORN rises and goes out in silence. In a few moments FANNY HAWTHORN comes in, followed by MRS. HAWTHORN. FANNY is a sturdy, determined, dark little girl, with thick lips, a broad, short nose and big black eyes. She is dressed rather smartly, but not very tastefully. She stands by the table unpinning her hat and talking cheerfully. MRS. HAWTHORN stands by the door and CHRISTOPHER remains in his chair. Both look at FANNY queerly.]

FANNY. Well, you didn't expect me as soon as this, I'll bet. I came round by Manchester. They said the trains would run better that way to-night. Bank Holiday, you know. I always think they let the Manchester trains through before any of the others, don't you?

MRS. HAWTHORN. We didn't see how you were to get here till past ten if you came direct. We've been looking up in the Guide.

FANNY. No. I wasn't for coming direct at any price. Mary wanted to.

CHRISTOPHER. Mary!

[CHRISTOPHER *is about to rise in astonishment, but* MRS. HAWTHORN *makes signs to him behind* FANNY'S *back.*

MRS. HAWTHORN. Oh! So Mary Hollins wanted to come back the other way, did she?

FANNY. Yes. But I wasn't having any. They said the Manchester trains would be—oh! I've told you all that already.

MRS. HAWTHORN. So you've had a good time, Fanny.

FANNY. Rather! A fair treat. What do *you* think?

MRS. HAWTHORN. Was Mary Hollins with you all the time?

FANNY. Of course she was.

[*She steals a puzzled glance at* MRS HAWTHORN.

MRS. HAWTHORN. And she came back with you to-night?

FANNY. Yes.

MRS. HAWTHORN. And where's she gone now?

FANNY. She's gone home of course. Where else should she go?

[*There is a short pause.*

CHRISTOPHER [*quietly*]. You're telling lies, my girl.

FANNY. What, father?

CHRISTOPHER. That's not the truth you've just been saying.

FANNY. What's not the truth?

CHRISTOPHER. You didn't spend the week-end in Blackpool with Mary Hollins.

FANNY. Who says I didn't?

CHRISTOPHER. I say so.

FANNY. Why do you think I didn't, father?

CHRISTOPHER. Well, did you?

FANNY. Yes, I did.

[CHRISTOPHER turns helplessly to his wife.

MRS. HAWTHORN. All right, Chris, wait a minute. Look here, Fanny, it's no use trying to make us believe you've been away with Mary.

FANNY. What? I can bring you any number of folk out of Hindle who saw us in Blackpool last week.

MRS. HAWTHORN. Last week, happen. Not this week-end?

FANNY. Yes.

MRS. HAWTHORN. Bring them, then.

FANNY. How can I bring them to-night? They've most of them not come back yet.

MRS. HAWTHORN. Tell us who to ask, then.

FANNY [*thinking*]. Ask Polly Birtwistle. Or Ethel Slater.

MRS. HAWTHORN. Yes. After you've got at them and given them a hint what to say.

FANNY. Of course if you'll believe that it's no use asking Mary. You'd only say *she* was telling lies as well.

[*There is a pause.*

FANNY. Will you go round and see Mary?

CHRISTOPHER. No.

MRS. HAWTHORN. Fanny, it's no use seeing Mary. You may as well own up and tell us where you've been.

FANNY. I've been to Blackpool with Mary Hollins.

MRS. HAWTHORN. You've not. You weren't there this week-end.

FANNY. Why, I sent you a picture postcard on Sunday.

MRS. HAWTHORN. Yes, we got that. Who posted it?

FANNY. I posted it myself at the pillar-box on the Central Pier.

[There is a pause. They do not believe her.]

FANNY [*flaring up*]. I tell you I've been all week-end at Blackpool with Mary Hollins.

CHRISTOPHER [*quietly*]. No, you've not.

FANNY [*pertly*]. Well, that's settled then. There's no need to talk about it any more.

[A pause. FANNY nervously twists her handkerchief.]

FANNY. Look here. Who's been saying I didn't?

CHRISTOPHER. We know you didn't.

FANNY. But you can't know.

MRS. HAWTHORN. As certain as there's a God in Heaven we know it.

FANNY. Well, that's not so certain after all.

CHRISTOPHER. Fanny! Take heed what you're saying.

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FANNY. Why can't you speak out? What do you know? Tell me that.

MRS. HAWTHORN. It's not for us to tell you anything. It's for you to tell us where you've been.

FANNY [*mutinously*]. I've told you.

[*They do not speak.* FANNY *rises quickly.*]

MRS. HAWTHORN. Where are you going?

FANNY. Are you trying to hinder me from going out when I please, now? I'm going to see Mary Hollins.

MRS. HAWTHORN. What for?

FANNY. To fetch her here. You shall see her whether you like it or not.

CHRISTOPHER. Fanny, I've already seen Mary Hollins.

[FANNY *turns and stares at him in surprise.*]

FANNY. When?

CHRISTOPHER. This morning.

FANNY. She was at Blackpool this morning.

CHRISTOPHER. So was I.

FANNY [*amazed*]. What were you doing there?

CHRISTOPHER. I went there with Jim Hollins. We went on purpose to see Mary.

FANNY. So it's Mary as has given me away, is it?

CHRISTOPHER [*nodding, slowly*]. Yes. You might say so.

FANNY [*angrily*]. I'll talk to her.

CHRISTOPHER. It wasn't her fault. She couldn't help it.

MRS. HAWTHORN. Now will you tell us where you've been?

FANNY. No, I won't. I'll see Mary first. What did she say to you?

CHRISTOPHER. When I told thee I went with Jim Hollins to Blackpool, I didn't tell thee quite everything, lass. [*Gently.*] Mary Hollins was drowned yesterday afternoon.

FANNY. What! [*She stares at CHRISTOPHER in horror.*]

CHRISTOPHER. It was one of them sailing boats. Run down by an excursion steamer. There was over twenty people on board. Seven of them was drowned.

FANNY. Oh! My poor Mary!

[*FANNY sinks down into her chair and stares dully at CHRISTOPHER.*]

MRS. HAWTHORN. You didn't know that?

FANNY [*shaking her head*]. No, no. [*She buries her head in her arms on the table and begins to sob.*]

MRS. HAWTHORN. Now then, Fanny. [*She is about to resume her inquisition.*]

CHRISTOPHER. Hold on, mother. Wait a bit. Give her a chance.

MRS. HAWTHORN [*waving him aside*]. Now then, Fanny. You see you've been telling lies all the time.

[*FANNY sobs.*]

MRS. HAWTHORN. Listen to me. You weren't at Blackpool this week-end.

FANNY [*to herself*]. Poor, poor Mary!

MRS. HAWTHORN [*patiently*]. You weren't at Blackpool this week-end.

[FANNY sobs.]

MRS. HAWTHORN. Were you?

FANNY [*sobbing*]. N—no. [*She shakes her head without raising it.*]

MRS. HAWTHORN. Where were you?

FANNY. Shan't tell you.

MRS. HAWTHORN. You went away for the week-end? [*No answer.*] Did you go alone? [*No answer.*] You didn't go alone, of course. [*No answer.*] Who did you go with?

FANNY. Leave me alone, mother.

MRS. HAWTHORN. Who did you go with? Did you go with a fellow?

[FANNY stops sobbing. *She raises her head the tiniest bit so that she can see her mother without seeming to do so. Her eyes are just visible above her arm. MRS. HAWTHORN marks the movement, nevertheless.*]

MRS. HAWTHORN [*nodding*]. Yes. You went with a chap?

FANNY [*quickly dropping her head again*]. No, I didn't.

MRS. HAWTHORN [*roughly*]. You little liar, you did! You know you did! Who was he?

[MRS. HAWTHORN *seizes FANNY by the shoulder and shakes her in exasperation.* FANNY sobs.]

MRS. HAWTHORN. Will you tell us who he was?

FANNY [*sharply*]. No, I won't.

[*There is a slight pause.*]

CHRISTOPHER. This is what happens to many a lass, but I never thought to have it happen to a lass of mine !

MRS. HAWTHORN. Why didn't you get wed if you were so curious ? There's plenty would have had you.

FANNY. Chance is a fine thing. Happen I wouldn't have had them !

MRS. HAWTHORN. Happen you'll be sorry for it before long. There's not so many will have you now, if this gets about.

CHRISTOPHER. *He* ought to wed her.

MRS. HAWTHORN. Of course he ought to wed her, and shall too, or I'll know the reason why ! Come now, who's the chap ?

FANNY. Shan't tell you.

MRS. HAWTHORN. Look here.

[*She places her hand on FANNY'S arm.*]

FANNY *turns round fiercely and flings it off.*

FANNY. Leave me alone, can't you ? You ought to be thankful he did take me away. It saved my life, anyhow.

MRS. HAWTHORN. How do you make that out ?

FANNY. I'd have been drowned with Mary if I hadn't gone to Llandudno.

MRS. HAWTHORN. Llandudno ? Did you say—— ?
[*She stops short.*]

CHRISTOPHER. Why mother, that's——

MRS. HAWTHORN [*cutting him short*]. Be quiet, can't you?

[*She reflects for a moment, and then sits down at the other side of the table, opposite FANNY.*]

MRS. HAWTHORN [*with meaning*]. When you were in Llandudno did you happen to run across Alan Jeffcote?

[*FANNY looks up and they stare hard at each other.*]

FANNY [*at length*]. How did you know?

MRS. HAWTHORN [*smiling grimly*]. I didn't. You've just told me.

FANNY [*gives a low moan*]. Oh! [*She buries her head and sobs.*]

MRS. HAWTHORN [*to CHRISTOPHER*]. Well. What do you think of her now?

CHRISTOPHER [*dazed*]. Nat Jeffcote's lad!

MRS. HAWTHORN. Ay! Nat Jeffcote's lad. But what does that matter? If it hadn't been him it would have been some other lad.

CHRISTOPHER. Nat and me were lads together. We were pals.

MRS. HAWTHORN. Well, now thy girl and Nat's lad are pals. Pull thyself together, man. What art going to do about it?

CHRISTOPHER. I don't know, rightly.

MRS. HAWTHORN. Aren't you going to give her a talking-to?

CHRISTOPHER. What's the good?

MRS. HAWTHORN. What's the good? Well, I like

that! My father would have got a stick to me.
[*She turns to FANNY.*] Did he promise to wed you?

FANNY [*in a low voice*]. No.

MRS. HAWTHORN. Why not?

FANNY. Never asked him.

MRS. HAWTHORN. You little fool! Have you no common sense at all? What did you do it for if you didn't make him promise to wed you?

[*FANNY does not reply.*]

MRS. HAWTHORN. Do you hear me? What made you do it?

[*FANNY sobs*]

CHRISTOPHER. Let her be, mother.

MRS. HAWTHORN. She's turned stupid. [*To FANNY.*] When did you go? [*No answer.*] Did you go in his motor-car? [*No answer.*] Where did you stay?

[*There is no answer, so she shakes FANNY.*]

Will you take heed of what I'm saying? Haven't you got a tongue in your head? Tell us exactly what took place.

FANNY. I won't tell you anything more.

MRS. HAWTHORN. We'll see about that.

CHRISTOPHER [*rising*]. That's enough, mother. We'll leave her alone to-night. [*He touches FANNY on the shoulder.*] Now then, lass, no one's going to harm thee. Stop thy crying. Thou'd better get upstairs to bed. Happen thou's fagged out.

MRS. HAWTHORN. You *are* soft. You're never going to let her off so easy?

CHRISTOPHER. There's plenty of time to tackle her in the morning. Come, lass.

[FANNY rises and stands by the table, wiping her eyes.]

Get to bed and have some sleep, if thou can.

[Without a word FANNY slowly goes to the door and out of the room. She does not look at either of them.]

MRS. HAWTHORN. Now then. What's to be done?

CHRISTOPHER. Ay! That's it.

MRS. HAWTHORN. You'll have to waken up a bit if we're to make the most of this. I can tell you what's the first job. You'll have to go and see Nathaniel Jeffcote.

CHRISTOPHER. I'll see him at the mill to-morrow.

MRS. HAWTHORN. To-morrow! You'll go and see him to-night. Go up to the house at Bank Top. If Alan's come home with Fanny he'll be there as well, and you can kill two birds with one stone.

CHRISTOPHER. It's a nasty job.

MRS. HAWTHORN. It's got to be done, and the sooner the better. How would it be if I come with you?

CHRISTOPHER [*hastily*]. Nay. I'll go alone.

MRS. HAWTHORN. I'm afraid you'll be too soft. It's a fine chance, and don't you forget it.

CHRISTOPHER. A fine chance?

MRS. HAWTHORN. To get her wed, thou great stupid. We're not going to be content with less. We'll show them up if they turn nasty.

CHRISTOPHER. He *ought* to wed her. I don't know what Nat 'll say.

MRS. HAWTHORN. Look here, if you're not going to stand out for your rights I'll come myself. I'm not afraid of Nat Jeffcote, not if he owned twenty mills like Daisy Bank.

CHRISTOPHER. I'm not afraid of him, neither, though he's a bad man to tackle. [*He rises.*] Where's my hat?

[MRS. HAWTHORN *gives him his hat and stick, and he goes to the door.*]

MRS. HAWTHORN. I say. I wonder if she's done this on purpose, after all. Plenty of girls have made good matches that way.

CHRISTOPHER. She said they never mentioned marriage. You heard her.

MRS. HAWTHORN. Well, he mightn't have gone with her if she had. Happen she's cleverer than we think!

CHRISTOPHER. She always was a deep one.

MRS. HAWTHORN. That's how Bamber's lass got hold of young Greenwood.

CHRISTOPHER. But there was a—— *He* couldn't help it, so well.

MRS. HAWTHORN. Yes. [*She reflects.*] Ah, well. You never know what may happen.

[CHRISTOPHER *goes out followed by*
MRS. HAWTHORN *as the curtain falls.*]

SCENE 2

The breakfast-room at Nathaniel Jeffcote's house, Bank Top, Hindle Vale, is almost vast, for the house is one of those great old-fashioned places standing in ample grounds that are to be found on the outskirts of the smaller Lancashire manufacturing towns. They are inhabited by wealthy manufacturers who have resisted the temptation to live at St. Anne's-on-the-Sea, or Blackpool. In the wall facing the spectator is the door from the hall, which when the door is open can be seen distinctly, a big square place. The fireplace is in the right-hand wall, and a bow window in the left-hand one. The furniture is solid and costly, but the room is comfortable and looks as if it is intended to be lived in. A table stands in the middle, a sideboard near the door, arm-chairs near the hearth, whilst other chairs and furniture (including a bookcase filled with standard works) complete the rather ponderous interior. The Jeffcotes use the breakfast-room for all meals except ceremonious ones, when the dining-room is requisitioned and an elaborate dinner is substituted for the high tea which Nathaniel persists in regarding as an essential of comfort and homeliness. It is about 10.30 on the same Bank Holiday evening. The room is well lighted by gas, not electricity, but of course there is no fire.

NATHANIEL JEFFCOTE and his wife are sitting alone in the room. He is a tall, thin, gaunt, withered,

domineering man of sixty. When excited or angry he drops into dialect, but otherwise his speech, though flat, is fairly accurate. MRS. JEFFCOTE has even more fully adapted herself to the responsibilities and duties imposed by the possession of wealth. She is a plump, mild and good-natured woman. She sits under the chandelier embroidering, whilst her husband sits in an arm-chair by the empty hearth working calculations in a small shiny black notebook, which he carries about with him everywhere, in a side pocket.

MRS. JEFFCOTE. I asked Mrs. Plews to let me have a look through Hindle Lodge to-day.

JEFFCOTE [*looking up*]. Eh? What's that?

MRS. JEFFCOTE. Mrs. Plews is leaving Hindle Lodge at Christmas.

JEFFCOTE. What of it?

MRS. JEFFCOTE. I was thinking it would do very well for Alan when he gets married.

JEFFCOTE. Is Alan talking about getting married?

MRS. JEFFCOTE. Beatrice was mentioning it last week.

JEFFCOTE. How long have they been engaged? A year?

MRS. JEFFCOTE. Eleven months. I remember it was on September the 5th that it happened.

JEFFCOTE. How on earth can you remember that?

MRS. JEFFCOTE. Because September the 5th is your birthday.

JEFFCOTE. Is it? [*He grunts.*] Well, eleven months isn't so long after all. Let 'em wait a bit longer.

MRS. JEFFCOTE. I thought we might be speaking for the Lodge.

JEFFCOTE. What do they want with a house like the Lodge? Isn't there plenty of room here? We've got four living-rooms and fourteen bedrooms in this house, and there's never more than three of them going at the same time.

MRS. JEFFCOTE. Really, Nat! They'll want a house of their own, no matter how many bedrooms we've got empty, and it's only natural.

JEFFCOTE. There's no hurry as far as I can see. Alan won't be twenty-five till next March, will he?

MRS. JEFFCOTE. You were only twenty-two when you married me.

JEFFCOTE. I didn't marry a girl who'd been brought up like Beatrice Farrar. I married a girl who could help me to make money. Beatrice won't do that. She'll help to spend it, likely.

MRS. JEFFCOTE. Well, he'll have it to spend. What's money for?

JEFFCOTE. Money's power. That's why I like money. Not for what it can buy.

MRS. JEFFCOTE. All the same, you've always done yourself pretty well, Nat.

JEFFCOTE. Because it pays in the long run. And it's an outward sign. Why did I buy a motor-car? Not because I wanted to go motoring. I hate it. I bought it so that people could see Alan driving about in it, and say, "There's Jeffcote's lad in his new car. It cost five hundred quid." Tim Farrar was so keen on getting his knighthood for the same reason.

Every one knows that him and me started life in a weaving shed. That's why we like to have something to show 'em how well we've done. That's why we put some of our brass into houses and motors and knighthoods and fancy articles of the kind. I've put a deal of brass into our Alan, and Tim Farrar's put a deal into his Beatrice, with just the same object in view.

[There is a short pause. JEFFCOTE goes on with his reckoning and MRS. JEFFCOTE with her sewing. Then she speaks quietly.]

MRS. JEFFCOTE. I was wondering what you intend to do for Alan when he gets married.

JEFFCOTE. Do for him? What do you mean?

MRS. JEFFCOTE. He doesn't get a regular salary, does he?

JEFFCOTE [*suspiciously*]. Has Alan been putting you up to talk to me about this?

MRS. JEFFCOTE. Well, Nat, if he has——?

JEFFCOTE. Why can't he talk to me himself?

MRS. JEFFCOTE [*placidly continuing*]. You're not such a good one to tackle. I daresay he thought I should do it better than he would.

JEFFCOTE. I don't keep him short, do I?

MRS. JEFFCOTE. No. But Sir Timothy will expect him to show something more definite before the wedding.

JEFFCOTE. Tim Farrar don't need to be afraid. I hope he'll leave his lass as much as I shall leave Alan. That lad'll be the richest man in Hindle some day.

MRS. JEFFCOTE. I daresay. Some day! That's

not much good to set up house on. Why don't you take him into partnership?

JEFFCOTE. Partnership?

MRS. JEFFCOTE. You always say he works hard enough.

JEFFCOTE [*grudgingly*]. Well enough.

MRS. JEFFCOTE. I suppose it comes to this. You don't want to take him into partnership because it would mean parting with some of that power you're so fond of.

JEFFCOTE. He mightn't work so well if he was his own master.

MRS. JEFFCOTE. But if you gave him a junior partnership he wouldn't be his own master. You'd see to that.

JEFFCOTE [*jocularly dropping into dialect*]. Eh, lass! thou'd better come and manage mill thyself.

MRS. JEFFCOTE. I shouldn't make such a bad job of it, neither! Remember that if you take him in you'll have less work to do yourself. He'll share the responsibility.

JEFFCOTE. Hold on a bit. 'The owd cock's not done with yet.

MRS. JEFFCOTE. If Beatrice starts talking about the date——

JEFFCOTE. Oh, if you'll stop your worritting I daresay I'll take the lad into partnership on his wedding-day.

MRS. JEFFCOTE. Can I tell Sir Timothy that?

JEFFCOTE. If you like. I told him myself six months ago.

MRS. JEFFCOTE. You *are* a caution, Nat, indeed you are! Why couldn't you tell me so at once, instead of making a fool of me like this?

JEFFCOTE. I like to hear thee talking, lass.

[*Having brought off this characteristic stroke of humour, JEFFCOTE resumes his work. The door opens and ADA comes in.*

ADA. If you please, sir, there's someone to see you.

JEFFCOTE [*absorbed*]. Eh?

MRS. JEFFCOTE. Who is it, Ada?

ADA. His name's Hawthorn, ma'am.

MRS. JEFFCOTE. It'll be Christopher Hawthorn, Nat.

JEFFCOTE. What does he want coming so late as this? Fetch him in here.

[*ADA goes out.*

Can't be owt wrong at the mill, seeing it's Bank Holiday.

[*ADA shows in CHRISTOPHER, who stands near the door.*

MRS. JEFFCOTE. Good evening, Mr. Hawthorn.

CHRISTOPHER. Good evening, Mrs. Jeffcote.

JEFFCOTE [*rising*]. Well, Chris!

CHRISTOPHER. Well, Nat!

[*These two old comrades address each other by their first names although master and man.*

JEFFCOTE. Sit down. The rain's held off.

CHRISTOPHER. Ay! [*He is obviously ill at ease.*]

MRS. JEFFCOTE. Where have you been these Wakes.

CHRISTOPHER. Nowhere.

MRS. JEFFCOTE. What? Stopped at home?

CHRISTOPHER. Ay! Somehow we don't seem quite as keen on Blackpool as we used to be. And the missus was badly last week with her leg, and what with one thing and another we let it drift this time round. You've not been away, either?

MRS. JEFFCOTE. No, we went to Norway in June, you know.

CHRISTOPHER. Ay! so you did. That must be a fine place—from the pictures.

MRS. JEFFCOTE. Alan is away, though. He is motor-ing in North Wales. We expect him back to-night.

JEFFCOTE. Business is too bad to go away, Chris. I was down in Manchester Tuesday and Friday. It isn't Wakes in Manchester, thou knows!

CHRISTOPHER. Anything doing?

JEFFCOTE. I landed ten sets of those brown jacconets on Friday. Five for October and five for November.

CHRISTOPHER. For the forty-four inch looms?

JEFFCOTE. Ay! And hark you, Chris! they're complaining about the tint. Not bright enough, they say in India. They've sent a pattern over this mail. You'd better have a look at it to-morrow. We've got to give them what they want, I reckon.

CHRISTOPHER. I don't think they do know what they want in India, Nat.

JEFFCOTE. You're about right there, Chris.

[A pause. CHRISTOPHER looks uncomfortably at MRS. JEFFCOTE.]

JEFFCOTE [*at length*]. When are you going to bed, mother?

MRS. JEFFCOTE [*taking the hint*]. Any time now.

JEFFCOTE. That's right. Just reach me the whisky before you go.

[MRS. JEFFCOTE *gets a bottle of whisky, a syphon and glasses from the sideboard cupboard.*

MRS. JEFFCOTE. Are you going to sit up for Alan?

JEFFCOTE. Why? Hasn't he got his latchkey?

MRS. JEFFCOTE. I expect so.

JEFFCOTE. Then I reckon he'll be able to find the keyhole, and if he can't he won't thank me for sitting up to welcome him.

MRS. JEFFCOTE [*smiling*]. You do talk some nonsense, Nat. Good-night, Mr. Hawthorn.

CHRISTOPHER [*rising*]. Good-night, Mrs. Jeffcote.

[MRS. JEFFCOTE *goes out of the room.*

JEFFCOTE. Have a drink, Chris?

CHRISTOPHER. No thanks, Nat.

JEFFCOTE [*incredulously*]. Get away!

CHRISTOPHER. Well—just a small one, then.

[JEFFCOTE *pours out two drinks.*

JEFFCOTE. Light your pipe, Chris.

CHRISTOPHER. Ay! Thanks. [*He does so.*]

JEFFCOTE. It's a long while since we had a quiet chat together. We don't see so much of each other as we did thirty years ago?

CHRISTOPHER. No. You've other fish to fry, I reckon.

JEFFCOTE. I'm always right glad to see you. How long have you been taping for me, Chris?

CHRISTOPHER. I came to you in '95. I remember because Joe Walmesley's shed was burnt down the same year.

JEFFCOTE. Ay! That was during the General Election, when Tories knocked out Mark Smethurst in Hindle. Joe was speaking at one of Mark's meetings when they come and told him his mill was afire. That was the only time I ever saw Joe Walmesley cry.

CHRISTOPHER. He was fond of them looms, was Joe!

JEFFCOTE. You missed your way, Chris, you did indeed, when you wouldn't come in with me and put your savings into Trafalgar Mill.

CHRISTOPHER. That's what the missus is never tired of telling me.

JEFFCOTE. You might have been my partner these fifteen years instead of only my slasher.

CHRISTOPHER. You'd never have got on with a partner, Nat. You're too fond of your own way.

JEFFCOTE. You're right there. I've been used to it for a good while now.

CHRISTOPHER. You don't remember Daisy Bank being built, Nat?

JEFFCOTE. No. I was living over Blackburn way then.

CHRISTOPHER. I was only a lad at the time. I used to come along the river bank on Sundays with the other lads. There were no weaving sheds in

Hindle Vale in those days ; nothing but fields all the way to Harwood Bridge. Daisy Bank was the first shed put up outside Hindle proper. They called it Daisy Bank because of the daisies in the meadows. All the side of the brow falling away towards the river was thick with them. Thick dotted it was, like the stars in the sky of a clear night.

JEFFCOTE. Look here, old lad, thou didn't come up here at this time of night just to talk about daisies.

CHRISTOPHER. Eh ?

JEFFCOTE. You've come up here with a purpose, haven't you ?

CHRISTOPHER. That's so, Nat.

JEFFCOTE. I could see that. That's why I sent the missus to bed. I know you of old. What is it that's troubling you ? Get it off your chest !

CHRISTOPHER. It's about my lass.

JEFFCOTE. Hullo !

CHRISTOPHER. I'm worried about her.

JEFFCOTE. What's she been doing ?

CHRISTOPHER. Getting into trouble.

JEFFCOTE. What sort of trouble ?

CHRISTOPHER [*troubled*]. Well, thou knows—there's only one sort of trouble——

JEFFCOTE. Ay—ay ! With a lad ?

CHRISTOPHER. Ay !

[*There is a slight pause.*]

CHRISTOPHER. It's only by chance we found it out. The missus is in a fine way about it, I can tell you !

JEFFCOTE. Then it's proper serious, like?

CHRISTOPHER. They've been away together, these Wakes.

JEFFCOTE [*whistling*]. Humph! She's a cool customer. What art going to do in the matter?

CHRISTOPHER. That's what I've come up to see thee about. I wasn't for coming to-night, but missus, she was set on it.

JEFFCOTE. Quite right, too. I'll help thee any road I can. But you mustn't take it too much to heart. It's not the first time a job like this has happened in Hindle, and it won't be the last!

CHRISTOPHER. That's true. But it's poor comfort when it's your own lass that's got into trouble.

JEFFCOTE. There's many a couple living happy to-day as first come together in that fashion.

CHRISTOPHER. Wedded, you mean?

JEFFCOTE. Ay! Wedded, of course. What else do you think I meant? Does the lad live in Hindle?

CHRISTOPHER. Ay! [*He does not know how to break it to JEFFCOTE.*]

JEFFCOTE. Whose shed does he work at?

CHRISTOPHER. Well, since you put it that way, he works at yours.

JEFFCOTE. At Daisy Bank? Do I know him?

CHRISTOPHER. Ay! You know him well.

JEFFCOTE. Then by Gad! I'll have it out with him to-morrow. If he doesn't promise to wed thy Fanny I'll give him the sack

CHRISTOPHER [*dazed*]. Give him the sack!

JEFFCOTE. And I'll go further. If he'll be a

decent lad and make it right with her at once, I'll see that he's well looked after at the mill. We're old pals, Chris, and I can't do no fairer than that, can I?

CHRISTOPHER. No.

JEFFCOTE. Now, then, who's the chap?

CHRISTOPHER. Thou'll be a bit surprised-like, I reckon.

JEFFCOTE. Spit it out!

CHRISTOPHER. It's thy lad, Alan.

JEFFCOTE [*sharply*]. What? [*a slight pause*]. Say that again.

CHRISTOPHER. Thy lad, Alan.

JEFFCOTE. *My* lad?

CHRISTOPHER. Ay!

[*After a short pause, JEFFCOTE springs up in a blazing rage.*]

JEFFCOTE. Damn you, Chris Hawthorn! why the devil couldn't you tell me so before?

CHRISTOPHER. I were trying to tell thee, Nat——

JEFFCOTE. Trying to tell me! Hasn't thou got a tongue in thy head that thou mun sit there like a bundle of grey-cloth while I'm making a fool of myself this road? [*He paces up and down in his agitation.*] Here! How do you know it's Alan? Who says it's Alan?

CHRISTOPHER. Fanny.

JEFFCOTE. Fanny, eh? How do you know she's not lying?

CHRISTOPHER [*stoutly*]. You can settle it soon enough by asking Alan. I thought to have found him here to-night.

JEFFCOTE. He's not come home yet?

CHRISTOPHER. No.

JEFFCOTE. And a good job for him, too!

CHRISTOPHER. Wouldn't he fetch Fanny back, think you?

JEFFCOTE. Would he, the dickens! He's not altogether without sense. Do you think he'd run her in the car through Hindle market-place and up Burnley Road and set her down at your house for all the folk to see?

CHRISTOPHER. No.

JEFFCOTE [*suddenly flaring up again*]. The bally young fool! I'd like to break his silly neck for him! And that lass of thine is just as much to blame as he is! I've marked her—the hot-blooded little wench!

CHRISTOPHER. I can't defend her. She's always been a bit of a mystery to her mother and me. There's that in her veins as keeps her restless and uneasy. If she sees you want her to do one thing she'll go right away and do t'other out of pure cussedness. She won't be driven, not any road. I had a dog just like her once.

JEFFCOTE. Eh, old lad, it's a good job you never had any boys if you don't know how to manage a girl!

CHRISTOPHER. Happen I could have managed lads better. I never could elout a girl properly.

JEFFCOTE. I can manage my lad without clouting. Always could.

CHRISTOPHER. Folk are different, you sec. Happen you couldn't have managed our Fanny.

JEFFCOTE. I'd have had a damn good try ! Where is she now ?

CHRISTOPHER. At the house. She was overdone, and I sent her to bed to get her out of range of the missus's tongue. She was talking rather bitter, like.

JEFFCOTE. She had a sharp way with her when she was Sarah Riley, had your missus, and I reckon it won't have improved with the passing of years ! I shouldn't wonder if it was your missus who got the truth out of Fanny.

CHRISTOPHER. So it was.

JEFFCOTE. And what *did* she get out of her ? Let's be knowing just what took place.

CHRISTOPHER. I can tell you nowt save that they stayed in Llandudno. You'll have to go to your lad for the rest of the story.

JEFFCOTE. All right. I'll see you to-morrow at the mill. There's nowt more to be done to-night.

CHRISTOPHER. Maybe it's a queer fancy, but I'd like to have seen him to-night. There's no chance of him coming in shortly, think you ?

JEFFCOTE. He may come in the next five minutes, or he may not come home at all. There's no telling what may happen on Bank Holiday.

CHRISTOPHER. Then it's no use me waiting a while ?

JEFFCOTE. Nay, you can't wait here. I'm going to bed. I'm not going to let this business spoil a night's rest. I'd advise you to look on it in the same light.

CHRISTOPHER. Ah, Nat, but it's not so hard on you as it is on me!

JEFFCOTE. Is it not? How do you know what plans of mine will come to naught through this job? [*More kindly*] Come, old lad, thou mun clear out. Thou can do nowt here.

CHRISTOPHER. Well, I've not said all that my missus told me to say, and I doubt she'll be on my track, but I reckon it's a bit too previous afore we've seen the lad.

JEFFCOTE. If your wife wants to say anything to me, she's welcome. You'd better fetch her up here to-morrow night, and bring Fanny along as well. I'll be ready for you by then.

CHRISTOPHER. To-morrow night?

JEFFCOTE. About nine o'clock. Do you understand?

CHRISTOPHER. Ay! [*He goes to the door, and JEFFCOTE rises.*] My wife said——

JEFFCOTE [*curtly*]. I can guess all that thy wife said. You can tell her this from me. I'll see you're treated right. Do you hear?

[JEFFCOTE opens the door.]

CHRISTOPHER. I can't ask for more than that.

JEFFCOTE. I'll see you're treated right.

[*They go into the hall out of sight.*]

ADA comes into the room with a tray which she places on the table. The tray holds bread, cheese, butter, a bottle of beer and a tumbler.

JEFFCOTE [*out of sight in the hall*]. I'm not afraid of thy wife, if you are.

[*The front door bangs. JEFFCOTE returns into the room and sees the tray, which he examines irritably.*

JEFFCOTE. What's this for?

ADA. Mr. Alan's tray, sir. We always leave it when he's out late.

JEFFCOTE [*flaring up*]. Take it away!

ADA. Take it away, sir?

JEFFCOTE. Yes. Do you hear? Take the damned thing away!

ADA. What about Mr. Alan's supper, sir?

JEFFCOTE. Let him do without.

ADA. Yes, sir.

[*ADA takes the tray out. JEFFCOTE watches her, and then goes to the window to see if it is fastened.*
MRS. JEFFCOTE, mostly undressed and attired in a dressing wrap, appears in the hall.

MRS. JEFFCOTE. Nat?

JEFFCOTE. What do you want?

MRS. JEFFCOTE. Is anything the matter?

JEFFCOTE. Why?

MRS. JEFFCOTE. I thought I heard you swearing, that's all.

JEFFCOTE. Happen I was.

MRS. JEFFCOTE. You've not quarrelled with Christopher Hawthorn?

JEFFCOTE. No, we're the best of friends. He only wanted my opinion about summat.

MRS. JEFFCOTE. What had you got to swear about, then?

JEFFCOTE. I was giving him my opinion.

MRS. JEFFCOTE. Well, but——

JEFFCOTE. That's enough. Get along to bed with you. Maybe I'll tell you all about it to-morrow. Maybe I won't!

MRS. JEFFCOTE. Well, I'm glad it's no worse. I thought you were coming to blows.

[MRS. JEFFCOTE goes out and upstairs.

JEFFCOTE sees the two glasses of whisky and soda which neither of the men has remembered to touch. He takes his own and drinks it.

ADA appears.

ADA. Please, sir, do you want anything else?

JEFFCOTE. No. Get to bed. [*She is going.*]
Have the other girls gone upstairs yet?

ADA. Yes, sir.

JEFFCOTE. And you've fastened the back door?

ADA. Yes, sir.

JEFFCOTE. Good-night.

ADA. Good-night, sir.

[ADA goes upstairs. JEFFCOTE slowly drinks the second glass of whisky and soda. He puts both the empty glasses on the sideboard and looks round the room. He turns out all the gases except one, which he leaves very low. He goes out into the hall, leaving the breakfast-

room door open, and is seen to go out of sight to the front door, as if to assure himself that it is on the latch. Then he turns the hall gas very low indeed, and goes upstairs.

THE CURTAIN FALLS

SCENE 3

The curtain rises again immediately. The scene is the same room about two hours later, that is to say at about one o'clock in the morning. Everything looks just the same. At first there is silence. Then is heard the scratching noise of a latchkey being inserted into the front door. The process takes some time. At last the door is heard to open, and someone stumbles in, making rather too much noise. The door is closed very quietly. A match is struck in the hall, out of sight. It goes out at once. Then a figure is dimly seen to appear in the doorway of the breakfast-room, lean against the jamb and look round. It is ALAN JEFFCOTE, who if he could be seen distinctly would be found a well-made, plump, easy-going young fellow, with a weak but healthy and attractive face and fair hair. He is of the type that runs to stoutness after thirty, unless diet and exercise are carefully attended to. At present he is too fond of luxury and good living to leave any doubt that this pleasant fellow of twenty-five will be a gross, fleshly man at forty. He is dressed by a good Manchester tailor, and everything he has is of the best. He does not stint his father's money. He has been to the Manchester Grammar School and Manchester University, but he has not lost the characteristic Hindle burr in his accent, though he speaks correctly as a rule. He does not ever speak

affectedly, so that his speech harmonises with that of the other characters. This is important, for though he has had a far better education than any of the other characters except BEATRICE, he is essentially one of them, a Hindle man. He has no feeling that he is provincial, or that the provinces are not the principal asset of England. London he looks upon as a place where rich Lancashire men go for a spree, if they have not time to go to Monte Carlo or Paris. Manchester he looks upon as the centre or headquarters for Lancashire manufacturers, and therefore more important than London. But after all he thinks that Manchester is merely the office for Hindle and the other Lancashire towns, which are the actual source of wealth. Therefore Hindle, Blackburn, Bolton, Oldham, and the rest are far more important in his eyes than London or Manchester, and perhaps he is right. Anyhow, the feeling gives him sufficient assurance to stroll into the most fashionable hotels and restaurants, conscious that he can afford to pay for whatever he fancies, that he can behave himself, that he can treat the waiters with the confidence of an aristocrat born—and yet be patently a Lancashire man. He would never dream of trying to conceal the fact, nor indeed could he understand why anybody should wish to try and conceal such a thing. He is now slightly intoxicated, not seriously drunk, only what he would himself describe as “a bit tight.” He strikes another

match and lurches towards the gas, only to find that it is already lighted. He blows out the match and tries to turn up the gas. As he reaches up he knocks a small bronze vase off the end of the mantel-piece. It falls into the fire-irons with an appalling crash.

ALAN. Curse it !

[He turns up the gas and clumsily picks up and replaces the vase. He sees on the mantel-piece a couple of letters addressed to him. He [tears them open, stares at them, and crams them unread into his pocket. Then he gazes at the table as if in search of something.]

ALAN. Where's that tray ? Where the devil's that tray ?

[He shakes his head and proceeds to look in the sideboard cupboard for food. He can find none, so he turns to the whisky and soda, and fills one of the empty glasses. This he puts on the mantel-piece, and then he sits in the arm-chair by the hearth, sinks back and holds his head in his hands. He seems to be going to sleep.

In the hall is observed a flickering light, coming nearer by degrees

Old NATHANIEL JEFFCOTE appears, a lean picturesque figure in pyjamas and dressing-gown, carrying in one hand a lighted bedroom candle and in the other a poker. He comes to the door of the room, stands at the threshold and contemplates his son. At length ALAN seems to feel that he is not alone, for he slowly steals a glance round to the door, and encounters his father's stern gaze.

ALAN. Hello! [*He smiles amiably.*] Thought you were in bed.

JEFFCOTE. So it's you, is it? What are you making all this din about?

ALAN. 'S not my fault. You don't s'pose I did it on purpose, do you?

JEFFCOTE. I'll not have you coming in and raising Cain at this time of night. It's enough to waken the dead!

ALAN. I can't help it. They go and stick that beastly thing up there! [*He points to the vase.*] Can't blame me for knocking it over. 'S not my fault. [*He hiccoughs.*] I can't help it.

JEFFCOTE. Are you drunk?

ALAN [*rising and standing with his back to the hearth in a dignified way*]. You've never seen me drunk yet! [*He hiccoughs.*]

[*JEFFCOTE approaches him and scrutinises him by the light of the candle.*]

JEFFCOTE. I've never seen thee nearer drunk, anyhow. Thou didn't drive the car home in this state, surely?

ALAN. No fear!

JEFFCOTE. Where have you left it?

ALAN. At "George and Dragon," in Hindle.

JEFFCOTE. I see. You've been at "George and Dragon"? Didn't they chuck you out at eleven?

ALAN. Ay! Then we went round to the Liberal Club.

JEFFCOTE. Who's "we"?

ALAN. Me and George Ramsbottom.

JEFFCOTE. Has George Ramsbottom been with you this week-end?

ALAN. No. I met him at the "Midland" at Manchester. We had a bit of dinner together.

JEFFCOTE. Ah! Where's George Ramsbottom been during the week-end?

ALAN. After his own devices.

JEFFCOTE. Humph! Like thyself, no doubt?

ALAN. Happen!

JEFFCOTE. What's thou been up to these Wakes?

ALAN. Nothing. Why?

JEFFCOTE [*holding the candle up to ALAN's face*]. Hast been with a girl?

ALAN [*flinching slightly*]. No.

JEFFCOTE. Thou hardened young liar!

ALAN [*staggered*]. Why?

JEFFCOTE [*looking hard at him*]. Chris Hawthorn's been here to-night.

ALAN [*vaguely*]. Chris Hawthorn?

JEFFCOTE. Ay!

[ALAN cannot bear his father's gaze.
*He is not able to keep up the
pretence of coolness any longer.
He turns towards the arm-chair
and stumbles into it, his attitude
of collapse denoting surrender.*

JEFFCOTE. Thou cursed young fool! I could find it in my heart to take a strap to thee, so I could. Why hadn't thou the sense to pay for thy pleasures, instead of getting mixed up with a straight girl? I've never kept thee short of brass. And if thou must have a straight girl, thou might have kept off one from the mill. Let alone her father's one of my oldest friends.

ALAN. What does he say?

JEFFCOTE. Say? What dost thou think he said? Does thou think as he come up here to return thanks?

ALAN. But—but, how did he know?

JEFFCOTE. The lass has told them, so it appears.

ALAN. She promised not to.

JEFFCOTE. Happen she did. And what then?

ALAN. What's going to be done?

JEFFCOTE. I said I'd see him treated right.

ALAN [*brightening*]. What'll they take?

JEFFCOTE [*dangerously*]. I said I'd see them treated right. If thou expects I'm going to square it with a cheque, and that thou's going to slip away scot free, thou's sadly mistaken.

ALAN. What do you want me to do?

JEFFCOTE. I know what thou's going to do. Thou's going to wed the lass.

H.W.

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ALAN. What do you say?

JEFFCOTE. Thou's heard me all right.

ALAN. Wed her? Fanny Hawthorn!

JEFFCOTE. Ay! Fanny Hawthorn.

ALAN. But I cannot.

JEFFCOTE. Why not?

ALAN. You know—Beatrice—I can't!

JEFFCOTE. 'Thou mun tell Beatrice it's off.

ALAN. How can I do that?

JEFFCOTE. 'That's thy look-out.

ALAN [*rising and holding on to the mantel-piece*].
Look here. I can't do it. It isn't fair to Beatrice.

JEFFCOTE. It's a pity thou didn't think of that
before thou went to Llandudno!

ALAN. But what can I tell her?

JEFFCOTE. 'Thou mun tell her the truth if thou
can't find owt better to say.

ALAN. The truth!

[ALAN *again collapses in the chair. A
pause.*]

JEFFCOTE. What's done is done. We've got to
stand by it.

ALAN. Father! I don't want to wed Fanny. I
want to wed Beatrice.

JEFFCOTE. Dost thou love Beatrice?

ALAN. Yes.

JEFFCOTE. I'm glad of it. It's right that thou
should suffer as well as her.

[ALAN *is overcome, and drops into
dialect as he pleads.*]

ALAN. Father, thou'll not make me do it! Thou'll

not make me do it! I cannot. I'd have all the folk in Hindle laughing at me.

[ALAN *breaks down, excitement and drink combined being too much for him.*

JEFFCOTE [*brusquely*]. Come now, pull thyself together.

ALAN. Ay! It's easy talking that road.

JEFFCOTE. Thou art a man, now. Not a kid!

ALAN. It's me that's got to go through it. It doesn't hurt thee if I wed Fanny Hawthorn

JEFFCOTE. Does it not?

ALAN. No.

JEFFCOTE. So thou thinks it easy for me to see thee wed Fanny Hawthorn? Hearken! Dost know how I began life? Dost know that I started as tenter in Walmesley's shed when I were eight years of age, and that when the time comes I shall leave the biggest fortune ever made in the cotton trade in Hindle? Dost know what my thought has been when labouring these thirty years to get all that brass together? Not what pleasure I could get out of spending, but what power and influence I were piling up the while. I was set on founding a great firm that would be famous not only all over Lancashire but all over the world, like Horrockses or Calverts or Hornbys of Blackburn. Dost think as I weren't right glad when thou goes and gets engaged to Tim Farrar's lass? Tim Farrar as were Mayor of Hindle and got knighted when the King come to open the new Town Hall. Tim Farrar that owns

Lane End Shed, next biggest place to Daisy Bank in Hindle. Why, it were the dearest wish of my heart to see thee wed Tim Farrar's lass; and, happen, to see thee running both mills afore I died. And now what falls out? Lad as I'd looked to to keep on the tradition and build the business bigger still, goes and weds one of my own weavers! Dost think that's no disappointment to me? Hearken! I'd put down ten thousand quid if thou could honestly wed Beatrice Farrar. But thou can't honestly wed her, not if I put down a million. There's only one lass thou can honestly wed now, and that's Fanny Hawthorn, and by God I'm going to see that thou does it!

[JEFFCOTE *stalks out of the room with his candle and his poker, which he has never put down, and ALAN remains huddled up and motionless in a corner of the arm-chair.*

THE CURTAIN FALLS

ACT II

The scene is again the breakfast-room at the JEFFCOTES' house. It is shortly after 8 p.m. on the day following that on which the First Act took place. The evening meal, tea, is just over. Only MR. and MRS. JEFFCOTE have partaken of it. ADA has almost finished clearing away, there is a loaded tray on the sideboard and the coloured cloth is not yet spread, although the white cloth has been removed. MRS. JEFFCOTE is sitting by the hearth, and JEFFCOTE is standing with his back to the empty fireplace filling his pipe. It is not yet dark, but the light is fading.

JEFFCOTE [*to ADA*]. Come now, lass, be sharp with your siding away.

[ADA is about to spread the coloured cloth. MRS. JEFFCOTE rises and assists her.]

MRS. JEFFCOTE. Give me that end, Ada.

[They spread the cloth whilst JEFFCOTE lights his pipe, and then ADA hurries out with the tray.]

JEFFCOTE. That girl wants wakening up.

MRS. JEFFCOTE. What are you in such a hurry about, Nat?

JEFFCOTE. I've got summat to say to you.

MRS. JEFFCOTE. Something to say to me. Why couldn't you say it whilst we were having tea?

JEFFCOTE. It's not quite the sort of thing to say before the servant.

MRS. JEFFCOTE [*surprised*]. Why, Nat, what is it?

JEFFCOTE. Last night you were talking of taking Hindle Lodge for Alan?

MRS. JEFFCOTE. Yes. I was going to call on Mrs. Plews this afternoon, only it came on wet.

JEFFCOTE [*briefly*]. Don't go.

MRS. JEFFCOTE. Why not?

JEFFCOTE. There's no need.

MRS. JEFFCOTE. Surely, Nat, you've not changed your mind again?

JEFFCOTE. Alan won't want to live in a place like Hindle Lodge.

MRS. JEFFCOTE. His wife will.

JEFFCOTE. How do you know that?

MRS. JEFFCOTE. I've asked her.

JEFFCOTE. Nay, you've not.

MRS. JEFFCOTE. Why, Nat, I mentioned it to Beatrice only a week ago.

JEFFCOTE. Happen you did. Alan's not going to marry Beatrice.

MRS. JEFFCOTE [*dumbfounded*]. Not going to marry—— [*She stops.*]

JEFFCOTE. That's what I said.

MRS. JEFFCOTE. Why? Have they quarrelled?

JEFFCOTE. No.

MRS. JEFFCOTE. Then, what's the matter? What

has happened? When did you get to know about it?

JEFFCOTE. I first got to know about it last night.

MRS. JEFFCOTE. That was what you were talking to Alan about when you went downstairs last night?

JEFFCOTE. Ay!

MRS. JEFFCOTE. And you said you were lecturing him on coming home so late. Why didn't you tell me the truth?

JEFFCOTE. I knew you'd learn it soon enough, and I didn't want to spoil your night's rest.

MRS. JEFFCOTE. Why didn't you tell me to-day, then?

JEFFCOTE. I've been at the Mill all day.

MRS. JEFFCOTE. You could have told me as soon as you came home.

JEFFCOTE. I didn't want to spoil your tea for you.

MRS. JEFFCOTE [*wiping her eyes*]. As if that mattered!

JEFFCOTE. Well, then, I didn't want to spoil *my* tea.

MRS. JEFFCOTE. Oh! Nat, what is it that's happened?

JEFFCOTE. To put it in a nutshell, Alan's not going to marry Beatrice because another girl has a better right to him.

MRS. JEFFCOTE. But how can that be? He's been engaged to Beatrice for nearly a year.

JEFFCOTE [*grimly*]. Ay! He's only been engaged to Beatrice. With the other girl he's gone a step further.

MRS. JEFFCOTE. He's not gone and got wed already?

JEFFCOTE. No. He's not got wed. He dispensed with the ceremony.

MRS. JEFFCOTE. Dispensed with it?

JEFFCOTE. Did without.

MRS. JEFFCOTE [*shocked*]. Oh, Nat!

JEFFCOTE. Ay. He spent last week-end with a girl at Llandudno.

MRS. JEFFCOTE. The creature!

JEFFCOTE. Eh?

MRS. JEFFCOTE [*indignantly*]. Why are such women allowed to exist?

JEFFCOTE [*scratching his head*]. Thou mun ask me another. I never looked on it in that light before.

MRS. JEFFCOTE. And at Llandudno, too, of all places. Why, I've been there many a time.

JEFFCOTE. What's that got to do with it?

MRS. JEFFCOTE. I shall never be able to fancy it again! And I'm so fond of the place.

JEFFCOTE. That's a pity. Happen you'll get over the feeling when they're married.

MRS. JEFFCOTE. But Nat, it's impossible! Alan can't marry a woman of that sort!

JEFFCOTE. She's not a woman of that sort. She's a straight girl.

MRS. JEFFCOTE. How can you call her that?

JEFFCOTE. Well, you know what I mean. It's not been a matter of business with her.

MRS. JEFFCOTE. I don't see that that makes

things any better. There might have been some excuse for her if it had been a matter of business. Really, Nat, you must see that the woman is not fit to marry Alan!

JEFFCOTE. Not quite so fast. You don't even know who she is yet.

MRS. JEFFCOTE. Whoever she is, if she's not above going away for the week-end with a man she can't be fit to marry our son.

JEFFCOTE. Not even when our son's the man she's been away with?

MRS. JEFFCOTE. That has nothing to do with the case. It is evident that she is a girl with absolutely no principles.

JEFFCOTE. Dash it all! at that rate some folk might say that Alan's not fit to marry her because of what he's done.

MRS. JEFFCOTE. Well, if you can't see the difference——

[He does not choose to. She shrugs her shoulders and continues.]

I'm surprised at you, Nat, I really am. You seem to take a delight in being perverse and making difficulties.

JEFFCOTE. Upon my soul, mother, I'd no idea thou were such an unscrupulous one before. Don't you want to do what's right.

MRS. JEFFCOTE. Can't you offer the girl some money?

JEFFCOTE. Would you think that right treatment?

MRS. JEFFCOTE. She wouldn't object. She'd jump at it.

JEFFCOTE. Shall I tell you who she is?

MRS. JEFFCOTE. Of course you'll tell me who she is. Though that won't make me much wiser, for I don't suppose I've ever heard her name before.

JEFFCOTE. What makes you think that?

MRS. JEFFCOTE. I'm sure nobody I know would do a thing like that.

JEFFCOTE. She's not exactly a friend of yours, but her father is a very old friend of mine. His name's Christopher Hawthorn.

MRS. JEFFCOTE [*open-mouthed*]. What!

JEFFCOTE. And the lass is his daughter Fanny.

MRS. JEFFCOTE. Fanny Hawthorn! Do you mean to tell me that the lad's going to marry one of our own weavers? Why, Nat, you must be out of your senses!

JEFFCOTE [*stubbornly*]. Think so?

MRS. JEFFCOTE. Why, all the folk in Hindle will be laughing at us.

JEFFCOTE. Anything else?

MRS. JEFFCOTE. I should just think I have got something else. What about Timothy Farrar, for instance? Have you thought what he'll say?

JEFFCOTE. What does it matter what Tim Farrar says?

MRS. JEFFCOTE. There's Beatrice.

JEFFCOTE. Ay! there's Beatrice. I'm right sorry for that girl. But there's the other girl to be considered, mind you.

MRS. JEFFCOTE. Does Beatrice know yet?

JEFFCOTE. No. I told Alan we'd go up to Farrar's to-night and have it out with them.

MRS. JEFFCOTE. Perhaps he's there now.

JEFFCOTE. Nay. He'll not be back from Manchester yet. He was stopping later because Raleigh's had got a cable in from India, and it wasn't translated when I left. Business before pleasure, mother!

MRS. JEFFCOTE. Then, thank goodness, it's not too late.

JEFFCOTE. What do you mean by that?

MRS. JEFFCOTE. This affair has got to be stopped.

JEFFCOTE. Now, old lass, don't thou start meddling with what doesn't concern thee.

MRS. JEFFCOTE. That a nice thing! It concerns me as much as you. I've a right to have my say when it comes to a wife for Alan, and I'll not give way without a struggle to a girl like Fanny Hawthorn.

JEFFCOTE. Come, now, what's wrong with her, after all?

MRS. JEFFCOTE. She's a girl without any character.

JEFFCOTE. Now, I should say she's a girl with a good deal of character.

MRS. JEFFCOTE. The wrong sort.

JEFFCOTE. How do you know that? We don't know what made her go away with Alan.

MRS. JEFFCOTE. I do. It was one of two things. Either she's thoroughly wicked, or else she was simply trying to make him marry her, and whichever it was it's evident she's no fit wife for Alan.

JEFFCOTE. Alan should have thought of that earlier.

MRS. JEFFCOTE. You are taking much too serious

a view of this affair, Nat; you are, indeed. Mind you, I'm not defending what Alan's done. I'm as shocked as anyone. I know it's a sin, and a grievous one too. What puzzles me is how he could do it. I wonder what made him. I don't know where he got it from. I'm sure he didn't get it from my side of the family!

JEFFCOTE. Happen he got it from Adam.

MRS. JEFFCOTE. Very well, then, all the more reason why you should overlook it.

JEFFCOTE. We can't overlook them sort of things in Lancashire same as we could in the Garden of Eden.

MRS. JEFFCOTE. If you can't overlook it altogether there's no reason why you should want to punish the lad like this. It's just cruelty, that's what it is, to make him marry a girl out of the Mill.

JEFFCOTE. You mean she's beneath him?

MRS. JEFFCOTE. Of course she's beneath him.

JEFFCOTE. It's queer what short memories some folks have! What was my father, I should like to know? And thine, too, if it comes to that? Why, I wore clogs myself until I was past twenty.

MRS. JEFFCOTE. Yes, and if you don't look out your grandson will wear them again. Don't forget the old saying: "There's three generations from clogs to clogs."

JEFFCOTE. A man may wear worse things than clogs. They're grand tackle for keeping the feet out of the wet.

MRS. JEFFCOTE. Don't talk so foolishly, Nat! I

know as well as you do that before you die you're hoping to see Alan a big man. Member for Hindle, perhaps. You know whether a wife like Fanny Hawthorn would be a hindrance to him or not.

JEFFCOTE. If a man's wife gets in the road of his career, then his career will have to suffer.

MRS. JEFFCOTE. And everyone knows what that means. He'll be blaming her all the time for standing in his light, and so his home life will be ruined as well.

JEFFCOTE. Marriage is a ticklish business anyhow. There's always the chance of a bust-up.

MRS. JEFFCOTE. Chance, indeed! It's as sure as Fate if Alan marries Fanny, and you know that. They'll be separated in five years. We've seen cases like that before.

JEFFCOTE. And shall again, I've little doubt.

MRS. JEFFCOTE. Well, Alan's shan't be one of them if I can help it.

JEFFCOTE. But you can't, old lass. I wear the breeches in this house.

MRS. JEFFCOTE. I'll be no party to it, anyhow! It shan't be said that I didn't lift my voice against the wedding.

[MRS. JEFFCOTE *is nearly sobbing by this time. The room is in semi-darkness. JEFFCOTE listens.*

JEFFCOTE. There's the front door. It'll be Alan. Come now, mother, don't make a scene.

[MRS. JEFFCOTE *wipes her eyes. ADA comes in.*

ADA. If you please, ma'am, Sir Timothy Farrar and Miss Beatrice.

MRS. JEFFCOTE. Oh! [*A pause.*] Mr. Alan hasn't come in yet?

ADA. No, ma'am.

MRS. JEFFCOTE. Are they in the drawing-room?

ADA. Yes, ma'am.

MRS. JEFFCOTE. Very well.

[*ADA withdraws.*]

MRS. JEFFCOTE. Dear me, Nat, this is very awkward. Why doesn't Alan come home? It's too bad of him, it is indeed.

JEFFCOTE. He's ashamed to face his mother, happen?

MRS. JEFFCOTE. He should know his mother better than that.

JEFFCOTE. Then he's trying to drive it too late to go up to Farrar's to-night.

MRS. JEFFCOTE. That's more likely.

JEFFCOTE. Very well. He's reckoned without his dad. If he's too much of a coward to face the music himself, I'll do it for him.

MRS. JEFFCOTE. What are you going to do?

JEFFCOTE. Just go and send Tim Farrar in here, while you keep Beatrice company in the other room.

MRS. JEFFCOTE. Are you going to tell him?

JEFFCOTE. Ay!

MRS. JEFFCOTE. But what shall I say to Beatrice?

JEFFCOTE. Say nowt.

MRS. JEFFCOTE. But I can't talk to her just as if

nothing has happened. It would be like deceiving her. I'm not cut out for a hypocrite.

JEFFCOTE. All right. Tell her everything. She'll have to know some time.

MRS. JEFFCOTE [*pleading*]. Need she ever know?

JEFFCOTE. Whatever falls out, it's not going to be hushed up.

MRS. JEFFCOTE. Strike a light, Nat.

[*He lights the gas.*]

Do I look as if I'd been crying?

JEFFCOTE. Why? Have you been crying?

MRS. JEFFCOTE. No.

JEFFCOTE. It doesn't show. Nothing to speak of.

[*MRS. JEFFCOTE goes out, and JEFFCOTE lights the other gas-jets, until the room is brightly illuminated. He gets out the whisky and soda.*
SIR TIMOTHY FARRAR, a portly red-faced, rough Lancashire man of fifty-nine or so, with a scrubby growth of hair under his chin, appears in the doorway. He is much the coarsest and commonest person in the play.

JEFFCOTE [*curtly*]. How do, Tim.

SIR TIMOTHY. How do, Nat.

JEFFCOTE [*nodding to a chair*]. Sit you down.

SIR TIMOTHY [*choosing the best chair*]. Ay—ay!

JEFFCOTE [*holding out a cigar-box*]. The old brand.

SIR TIMOTHY [*choosing the best cigar with deliberation*]. I'll have a drop of whisky, too, Nat.

JEFFCOTE. Help yourself.

[JEFFCOTE *places the whisky handy, and then closes the door.*

So they've made you Chairman of Hindle Education Committee, Tim?

SIR TIMOTHY. Ay! Why not? Thou knows I were reet mon for the job.

JEFFCOTE. Thou's not done much studying since thou were eight year of age.

SIR TIMOTHY. Happen I haven't. But I'm going to take damn good care that Hindle new Technical School is the finest in Lancashire. Or Yorkshire either, if it comes to that!

JEFFCOTE. Why not finest in England whilst you are about it?

SIR TIMOTHY. If it's finest in Lancashire and Yorkshire it goes without saying it's finest in England. They don't know how to spend money on them in the South. Besides, what should they want with Technical Schools in them parts? They don't *make* anything to speak of.

JEFFCOTE. They're a poor lot, it's true.

SIR TIMOTHY. I were in London all last week.

JEFFCOTE. Corporation business?

SIR TIMOTHY. Ay!

JEFFCOTE. Expenses paid?

SIR TIMOTHY. Ay!

JEFFCOTE. That's the style.

SIR TIMOTHY. Where's the lad?

JEFFCOTE. Not got home yet.

SIR TIMOTHY. Beatrice were expecting him to

telephone all day, but he didn't. So as soon as we'd done eating she were on pins and needles to look him up.

JEFFCOTE. He was coming round to your place to-night.

SIR TIMOTHY. I told the lass he'd be sure to. She hasn't seen him for ten days, thou knows, and that seems a long time when it's before the wedding. It doesn't seem so long afterwards. That reminds me! Have you seen "The Winning Post" this week?

JEFFCOTE. Nay. I rarely look at it.

SIR TIMOTHY. There's a tale in this week—it'll suit thee down to the ground.

JEFFCOTE. Hold on a bit. There's something I've a mind to tell you.

SIR TIMOTHY. Let me get mine off' my chest first. It's about a fellow who took a girl away for the week-end——

JEFFCOTE. So's mine.

SIR TIMOTHY. Oh! It's the same one. [*He is disappointed.*]

JEFFCOTE. Nay, it isn't.

SIR TIMOTHY. How do you know?

JEFFCOTE. Mine's true.

SIR TIMOTHY. True, is it? [*He considers.*] Well, let's hear it. Who's the fellow?

JEFFCOTE. Chap out of Hindle.

SIR TIMOTHY [*looking him in the face*]. Here! Who's been giving me away?

JEFFCOTE. Eh?

SIR TIMOTHY. I say who's been giving me away?

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JEFFCOTE. Thee? [*He stares at SIR TIMOTHY and then breaks into a roar of laughter.*] Thou's given thyself away, Tim Farrar. I wasn't talking about thee at all.

SIR TIMOTHY [*wiping his brow*]. Eh! I thought as someone had seen us at Brighton. I don't mind thee knowing, but if the wrong person gets hold of that sort of thing all Hindle is apt to hear about it. Well, who's the chap?

JEFFCOTE. Our Alan.

SIR TIMOTHY. What! The young devil! I'd like to give him a reet good hiding.

JEFFCOTE. Come. Thou'rt a nice man to talk, after what I've just learned.

SIR TIMOTHY. Hang it all, it's different with me! I'm not engaged to be wed. Why, I haven't even got a wife living. [*Fuming*] The young beggar!

JEFFCOTE. I thought I'd better tell thee first.

SIR TIMOTHY. Ay—ay! I'll talk pretty straight to him.

JEFFCOTE. Perhaps you'll choose to tell Beatrice yourself.

SIR TIMOTHY. Tell who?

JEFFCOTE. Beatrice.

SIR TIMOTHY. Why? What's it got to do with her?

JEFFCOTE. Someone will have to tell her. She'll have to know sooner or later.

SIR TIMOTHY. God bless my soul, Nat Jeffcote! hast thou told thy missus everything thou did before thou got wed?

JEFFCOTE. I'd nowt to tell her.

SIR TIMOTHY. I always thought there was summat queer about thee, Nat. [*He shakes his head.*] Well, I'm not going to have Bee told of this affair, and that's flat. It's all over and done with.

JEFFCOTE. It's not all over. You don't understand. This girl is a decent girl, thou knows. Daughter of Chris Hawthorn.

SIR TIMOTHY. What! Him as slashes for thee?

JEFFCOTE. Ay!

SIR TIMOTHY. I've seen her. A sulky-looking wench. Well, I cannot see what difference it makes who the girl was. I reckon Alan's not going to marry her.

JEFFCOTE. That's just what he is going to do.

SIR TIMOTHY. What!

JEFFCOTE. You heard what I said.

SIR TIMOTHY. But he's going to marry my Beatrice.

JEFFCOTE. If he does he'll be had up for bigamy.

SIR TIMOTHY. Do you mean to say he's going to throw her over?

JEFFCOTE. There's no need to put it that way.

SIR TIMOTHY. There's no other way to put it if he weds Fanny Hawthorn.

JEFFCOTE. What else can he do?

SIR TIMOTHY. There's ways and means.

JEFFCOTE. For instance——

SIR TIMOTHY. It's only a question of money.

JEFFCOTE. Have you forgotten who she is?

SIR TIMOTHY. She's one of thy weavers. That'll cost thee a trifle more.

JEFFCOTE. She's daughter of one of my oldest friends.

SIR TIMOTHY. I'm one of thy oldest friends, likewise. What about my lass? Have you thought what a fool she'll look?

JEFFCOTE. I'm sorry. But t'other girl must come first. I think well enough of Beatrice to know she'll see it in that light when it's put to her.

SIR TIMOTHY. And who's going to put it to her, I should like to know?

JEFFCOTE. You can put it to her yourself, if you've a mind.

SIR TIMOTHY. Dang it! It's a nice awkward thing to talk to a lass about. Here! before I go any further with this job I want to see Alan, and know for certain what he's going to do.

JEFFCOTE. He'll do what I tell him.

SIR TIMOTHY. I doubt it! I know he's a fool, but I don't think he's such a fool as all that.

[The door opens and ALAN looks in.]

SIR TIMOTHY. Why—talk of the devil——

ALAN. Hello, Sir Timothy! Has Bee come with you?

JEFFCOTE. She's with your mother in the drawing-room.

ALAN. Right.

[ALAN is withdrawing when JEFFCOTE calls him back.]

JEFFCOTE. Here! I say! Just wait awhile. We've summat to say to you.

[ALAN comes in reluctantly.]

JEFFCOTE. Anything fresh in Manchester ?

ALAN. No.

JEFFCOTE. Nowt for us in that cable ?

ALAN. No.

JEFFCOTE. You're very late.

ALAN. I got something to eat in Manchester.

[He is for withdrawing again.]

JEFFCOTE. Hold on a bit. You'd better shut the door and sit down.

SIR TIMOTHY. Now then, what's all this I hear tell about thee ?

ALAN *[to JEFFCOTE]*. Have you been telling him ?

JEFFCOTE. Ay !

ALAN. You'd no right to !

JEFFCOTE. Hello !

ALAN. It was my business.

JEFFCOTE. It was your business right enough, but if I'd left it to you it wouldn't have been done. I can see that you weren't for going up to Farrar's to-night.

ALAN. No, I wasn't.

JEFFCOTE *[grimly]*. I knew it.

ALAN. And that's just why you hadn't any right to tell Sir Timothy.

JEFFCOTE. You young fool ! What was the good of hanging back ? Sir Timothy had got to be told some time, I reckon.

ALAN. Why ?

JEFFCOTE. Why ? You don't suppose he's going to see you throw his Beatrice over without knowing why ?

ALAN. Who says I'm going to throw his Beatrice over ?

JEFFCOTE [*looking hard at him*]. I say so.

ALAN. Happen it would be better if you'd stick to what concerns you in future.

JEFFCOTE [*rising*]. What the deuce dost thou mean by talking to me that road ?

SIR TIMOTHY [*rising*]. Here ! hold on a bit. Don't go shouting the lad down, Nat Jeffcote. I want to hear what he's got to say.

ALAN. If father hadn't opened his mouth there'd have been no call to say anything. It wasn't me who started to make difficulties.

SIR TIMOTHY. I'll bet it wasn't. You'd have let the thing slide ?

ALAN. I'd have tried to settle it.

SIR TIMOTHY. Then I take it thou's no desire to wed Fanny Hawthorn ?

ALAN. I don't think it's necessary.

SIR TIMOTHY. No more do I.

JEFFCOTE [*to ALAN*]. I thought we had this out last night. Were you so drunk that you couldn't take in what I said ?

ALAN. No.

JEFFCOTE. Why did you not speak out then ?

ALAN. You never gave me a chance. You did all the talking yourself.

SIR TIMOTHY. I'd be ashamed to say that. I'd like to see the man as could shut *my* mouth when I'd had too much to drink. *Thou* couldn't do it, Nat, fond of shouting as thou art !

ALAN. He's not your father.

SIR TIMOTHY. Art afraid of him?

ALAN. No.

SIR TIMOTHY. Then stand up to him. I'll back thee up.

ALAN. I've told him I'm not going to wed Fanny. What more does he want?

JEFFCOTE. You've made up your mind?

ALAN. Yes.

JEFFCOTE. Very well. I've rarely been beat up to now, and I'm not going to be beat by my own lad!

SIR TIMOTHY. Hang it all, Nat, thou cannot take him by the scruff of the neck and force him to wed where he doesn't want to!

JEFFCOTE. No, that's true. And no one can force me to leave my brass where I don't want to.

SIR TIMOTHY. Thou's not serious?

JEFFCOTE. I am that.

SIR TIMOTHY. Thou wouldn't care to leave Daisy Bank outside the family.

JEFFCOTE. It wouldn't go outside the family if I left it to his cousin Travis.

SIR TIMOTHY [*grimacing*]. Thou art a queer chap, Nat!

ALAN. So it comes to this. If I don't marry Fanny you'll leave your brass to Travis?

JEFFCOTE. That's it.

ALAN. I see. [*He thinks a moment.*] And would Travis be expected to take Fanny over along with the mill?

[JEFFCOTE *winces, and makes as if to reply angrily, but he thinks better of it and remains grimly silent.*
A pause.

ALAN. Very well. Leave it to Travis. I'm going to stick to Beatrice.

JEFFCOTE. Right. You haven't thought what you and Beatrice are going to live on, have you?

ALAN. I'm not such a fool that I can't earn my own living.

JEFFCOTE. What you'll earn won't go very far if you have to keep a girl like Beatrice.

ALAN. Beatrice and I can manage like you and mother did.

JEFFCOTE. No, you can't. You haven't been brought up to it.

ALAN. Then Sir Timothy will help us.

JEFFCOTE. Sir Timothy? Oh, ay! [*He laughs sardonically.*] I'd like to hear what Tim Farrar thinks of the situation now.

SIR TIMOTHY [*scratching his head*]. It's not straight of thee, Nat. Thou's not acting right.

JEFFCOTE. I've put thee in a bit of a hole, like?

SIR TIMOTHY. Thou's made it very awkward for me.

ALAN. I like that! It was you who told me to stand up to father. You said you'd back me up.

SIR TIMOTHY. Oh, ay! I'll back thee up all right. But there's no good in losing our tempers over this job, thou knows. I don't want to see a split 'twixt thee and thy father.

ALAN. If I don't mind, I don't see why you should.

SIR TIMOTHY. Lord bless thee! if thou art bent on a row, have it thy own way. But thy father's one of my oldest friends, think on, and I'm not going to part from him for thy sake. *Thou* can quarrel with him if thou's a mind to, but don't expect me to do the same.

ALAN. You're trying to draw out, now.

SIR TIMOTHY. I'll stand in at anything in reason, but I'll be no party to a bust-up. Besides, now I come to think of it, I'm not sure thou's treated my Beatrice right.

ALAN. Hello!

SIR TIMOTHY. No, I'm not. When a chap's engaged he ought to behave himself. From the way thou's been carrying on thou might be married already.

ALAN. Look here! You knew all this five minutes ago, when you told me to stand up to my father. What's happened to change you?

SIR TIMOTHY. Thou's very much mistaken if thou thinks I've changed my mind because thy father's leaving the Mill to thy cousin Travis. I'm not the man to do that sort of thing. Besides, what do I care about thy father's brass? I'm worth as much as he is.

JEFFCOTE [*pleasantly*]. That's a lie, Tim Farrar.

SIR TIMOTHY. Lie or not, I'm worth enough to be able to snap my fingers at thy brass. I'll not see my lass insulted by thy lad, not if thou were ten times as rich as thou makes out!

ALAN [*exasperated*]. But don't you see——

SIR TIMOTHY. No, I don't.

JEFFCOTE. Yes, you do. You're only trying to draw a red-herring across the track.

SIR TIMOTHY. Be damned to that for a tale!

JEFFCOTE. It's right.

SIR TIMOTHY. Dost take me for a mean beggar?

JEFFCOTE. No. I take thee for a business man. I never think of thee as owt else.

SIR TIMOTHY [*with heat*]. Dost tell me thou can believe I don't wish Alan to marry Bee just because of what thou's said about leaving thy brass?

JEFFCOTE. I do.

[*A pause. SIR TIMOTHY looks hard at*
JEFFCOTE.

SIR TIMOTHY. Well! And why not?

JEFFCOTE. Don't ask me. I don't object.

ALAN. Aren't you ashamed to say that?

SIR TIMOTHY. No. And if thou'd been in weaving as long as I have, thou wouldn't either. Thou's got to keep an eye on the main chance.

ALAN. But you've got plenty of money yourself. Quite enough for the two of us.

SIR TIMOTHY [*whimsically*]. Well, blow me if thou aren't the best business man of the lot! Thou comes along and asks me for my daughter and my money. And what does thou offer in exchange? Nowt but thyself! It isn't good enough, my lad.

ALAN. Good enough or not, it's the best I can do.

SIR TIMOTHY. It won't do for me.

ALAN. I shan't bother about you.

SIR TIMOTHY. Eh? What's that?

ALAN. I don't want to marry you. I shall leave it to Beatrice.

SIR TIMOTHY. Bee'll do what I tell her. Thou can take that from me.

ALAN. No thanks. I'll ask her myself. I don't care a hang for the pair of you. I'm going to stick to Beatrice if she'll have me. You can cut us off with a shilling if you've a mind to, both of you.

SIR TIMOTHY [*worried*]. Hang it! Thou knows I cannot do that with my Bee. I call it taking a mean advantage of me, that I do!

JEFFCOTE. Why cannot you cut off your lass?

SIR TIMOTHY. Thou knows well enough that I cannot.

JEFFCOTE. I could.

SIR TIMOTHY. I don't doubt it. But, thank God, I'm not like thee, Nat Jeffcote. I sometimes think thou'st got a stone where thy heart should be by rights.

JEFFCOTE. Happen, I've got a pair of scales.

SIR TIMOTHY. That's nowt to boast of. I'd as soon have the stone.

[*The door opens and* MRS. JEFFCOTE *looks in.*

MRS. JEFFCOTE [*seeing* ALAN]. Beatrice wants to speak to you, Alan.

[MRS. JEFFCOTE *enters, followed by* BEATRICE FARRAR, *a determined straightforward girl of about twenty-three.*

SIR TIMOTHY [*to* BEATRICE]. Now my lass——

BEATRICE. Father, I want to speak to Alan.

SIR TIMOTHY. I'd like to have a word with thee first, Bee.

BEATRICE. Afterwards, father.

SIR TIMOTHY. Ay! but it'll be too late afterwards, happen!

JEFFCOTE. Come, 'Tim, thou can't meddle with this job.

SIR TIMOTHY [*worried*]. I call it a bit thick!

BEATRICE. Please, father.

MRS. JEFFCOTE. Come into the drawing-room, Sir Timothy. You can smoke there, you know.

SIR TIMOTHY [*grumbling*]. A bit thick!

[*He is led out by MRS. JEFFCOTE. JEFFCOTE is following, when he turns in the doorway.*]

JEFFCOTE. I'll overlook all you've said to-night if you'll be guided by me. But it's your last chance, mind.

ALAN. All right.

JEFFCOTE [*half to himself*]. I never fancied thy cousin Travis.

[*SIR TIMOTHY returns to the doorway.*]

SIR TIMOTHY [*indignantly*]. Here! What's all this? Thou wouldn't let me stop behind! What's thou been saying to Alan?

JEFFCOTE. Telling him not to make a fool of himself.

SIR TIMOTHY. I don't call it fair——

JEFFCOTE. Come along. Don't *thee* make a fool of thyself, either.

[JEFFCOTE *draws* SIR TIMOTHY out of the room.

[After they have gone ALAN closes the door, and then turns slowly to BEATRICE. They do not speak at first. At last BEATRICE almost whispers.

BEATRICE. Alan!

ALAN. So they've told you?

BEATRICE. Yes.

ALAN. Perhaps it's as well. I should have hated telling you.

BEATRICE. Alan, why did you——?

ALAN. I don't know. It was her lips.

BEATRICE. Her lips?

ALAN. I suppose so.

BEATRICE. I—I see.

ALAN. I'm not a proper cad, Bee. I haven't been telling her one tale and you another. It was all an accident, like.

BEATRICE. You mean it wasn't arranged?

ALAN. No, indeed, it wasn't. I shouldn't like you to think that, Bee. I ran across her at Blackpool.

BEATRICE. You didn't go to Blackpool to meet her?

ALAN. On my oath I didn't! I went there in the car with George Ramsbottom.

BEATRICE. What became of him?

ALAN. Him? Oh! George is a pal. He made himself scarce.

BEATRICE. Just as you would have done, I suppose, if he had been in your place?

ALAN. Of course! What else can a fellow do? Two's company, you know. But old George would be all right. I daresay he picked up something himself.

BEATRICE. You knew her before you met her at Blackpool?

ALAN. Of course. There's not so many pretty girls in Hindle that you can miss one like Fanny Hawthorn. I knew her well enough, but on the straight, mind you. I thought she looked gay, that was all. I'd hardly spoken to her before I ran into her at the Tower at Blackpool.

BEATRICE. So you met her at the Tower?

ALAN. Yes. We'd just had dinner at the Metropole Grill-room, George and I, and I daresay we had drunk about as much champagne as was good for us. We looked in at the Tower for a lark, and we ran into Fanny in the Ball-room. She had a girl with her—Mary—Mary—something or other. I forget. Anyhow, George took Mary on, and I went with Fanny.

BEATRICE. Yes?

ALAN. Next day I got her to come with me in the car. We went to Llandudno.

BEATRICE. Yes?

ALAN. There's not much more to say.

BEATRICE. And I've got to be satisfied with that?

ALAN. What else do you want me to tell you?

BEATRICE. Didn't you ever think of me?

ALAN. Yes, Bee, I suppose I did. But you weren't

there, you see, and she was. That was what did it. Being near her and looking at her lips. Then I forgot everything else. Oh! I know. I'm a beast. I couldn't help it. I suppose you can never understand. It's too much to expect you to see the difference.

BEATRICE. Between me and Fanny?

ALAN. Yes. Fanny was just an amusement—a lark. I thought of her as a girl to have a bit of fun with. Going off with her was like going off and getting tight for once in a way. You wouldn't care for me to do that, but if I did you wouldn't think very seriously about it. You wouldn't want to break off our engagement for that. I wonder if you can look on this affair of Fanny's as something like getting tight—only worse. I'm ashamed of myself, just as I should be if you caught me drunk. I can't defend myself. I feel just an utter swine. What I felt for Fanny was simply—base—horrible——

BEATRICE. And how had you always thought of me?

ALAN. Oh, Bee, what I felt for you was something—higher—finer——

BEATRICE. Was it? Or are you only trying to make yourself believe that?

ALAN. No. I respected you.

BEATRICE [*thinking*]. I wonder which feeling a woman would rather arouse. And I wonder which is most like love?

ALAN. All the time, Bee, I have never loved anyone else but you.

BEATRICE. You say so now. But, forgive me dear, how am I to know? You have given Fanny the greater proof.

ALAN. I'm trying to show you that Fanny was one thing, you were another. Can't you understand that a fellow may love one girl and amuse himself with another? [*Despondently*] No, I don't suppose you ever can?

BEATRICE. I think I can. We were different kinds of women. On separate planes. It didn't matter to the one how you treated the other.

ALAN. That's it. Going away with Fanny was just a fancy—a sort of freak.

BEATRICE. But you have never given me any proof half so great as that.

ALAN. Haven't I? I'll give it you now. You know that father says I am to marry Fanny?

BEATRICE. Your mother told me he wished it.

ALAN. Wished it! He's set his mind on it. He won't leave me a farthing unless I marry her.

BEATRICE. What did you tell him?

ALAN. If you can't guess that you haven't much confidence in me.

BEATRICE. That's hardly my fault, is it?

ALAN. No. Well, I told him I'd see him damned first—or words to that effect.

BEATRICE [*with a movement of pleasure*]. You did?

ALAN. Yes. Is that good enough for you, Bee? You wanted proof that it is you I love. I've chucked away everything I had to expect in the world rather

than give you up. Isn't that good enough for you?

BEATRICE. Alan!

ALAN [*quickly clasping her*]. Bee, in a way I've been faithful to you all the time. I tried hard enough to forget all about you, but I couldn't. Often and often I thought about you. Sometimes I thought about you when I was kissing Fanny. I tried to pretend she was you. She never guessed, of course. She thought it was her I was kissing. But it wasn't. It was you. Oh, the awfulness of having another girl in my arms and wanting you!

[BEATRICE *does not answer. She closes her eyes, overcome.*

Bee, you'll stick to me, although I shan't have a penny? I'll get to work, though. I'll work for you. You won't have any cause to reproach me. If only you'll stick to me. If only you'll tell me you forgive me!

BEATRICE [*at length*]. Could you have forgiven me if I had done the same as you?

ALAN [*surprised*]. But—you—you couldn't do it!

BEATRICE. Fanny Hawthorn did.

ALAN. She's not your class.

BEATRICE. She's a woman.

ALAN. That's just it. It's different with a woman.

BEATRICE. Yet you expect me to forgive you. It doesn't seem fair!

ALAN. It isn't fair. But it's usual.

BEATRICE. It's what everybody agrees to.

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ALAN. You always say that you aren't one of these advanced women. You ought to agree to it as well.

BEATRICE. I do. I can see that there is a difference between men and women in cases of this sort.

ALAN. You can?

BEATRICE. Men haven't so much self-control.

ALAN. Don't be cruel, Bee. There's no need to rub it in!

BEATRICE. I'm not being personal, Alan. I'm old-fashioned enough to really believe there is that difference. You see, men have never had to exercise self-control like women have. And so I'm old-fashioned enough to be able to forgive you.

ALAN. To forgive me, and marry me, in spite of what has happened, and in spite of your father and mine?

BEATRICE. I care nothing for my father or yours. I care a good deal for what has happened, but it shows, I think, that you need me even more than I need you. For I do need you, Alan. So much that nothing on earth could make me break off our engagement, if I felt that it was at all possible to let it go on. But it isn't. It's impossible.

ALAN. Impossible? Why do you say that? Of course it's not impossible.

BEATRICE. Yes, it is. Because to all intents and purposes you are already married.

ALAN. No, Bec!

BEATRICE. You say I'm old-fashioned. Old-fashioned people used to think that when a man

treated a girl as you have treated Fanny it was his duty to marry her.

ALAN. You aren't going to talk to me like father Bee?

BEATRICE. Yes. But with your father it is only a fad. You know it isn't that with me. I love you, and I believe that you love me. And yet I am asking you to give me up for Fanny. You may be sure that only the very strongest reasons could make me do that.

ALAN. Reasons! Reasons! Don't talk about reasons, when you are doing a thing like this!

BEATRICE. You may not be able to understand my reasons. You have always laughed at me because I go to church and believe things that you don't believe.

ALAN. I may have laughed, but I've never tried to interfere with you.

BEATRICE. Nor I with you. We mustn't begin it now, either of us.

ALAN. Is this what your religion leads you to? Do you call it a Christian thing to leave me in the lurch with Fanny Hawthorn? When I need you so much more than I've ever done before?

BEATRICE. I don't know. It's not what I can argue about. I was born to look at things just in the way I do, and I can't help believing what I do.

ALAN. And what you believe comes before me?

BEATRICE. It comes before everything. [*A pause.*] Alan promise that you'll do what I wish.

ALAN. You love me?

BEATRICE. If I love anything on earth I love you.

ALAN. And you want me to marry Fanny?

BEATRICE. Yes. Oh, Alan! can't you see what a splendid sacrifice you have it in your power to make? Not only to do the right thing, but to give up so much in order to do it. [*A pause.*] Alan, promise me.

ALAN [*nodding sullenly*]. Very well.

BEATRICE [*gladly*]. You have sufficient courage and strength?

ALAN. I'll do what you ask, but only because I can see that your talk is all humbug. You don't love me. You are shocked by what I did, and you're glad to find a good excuse for getting rid of me. All right. I understand.

BEATRICE [*in agony*]. You don't—you don't understand.

ALAN. Faugh! You might have spared me all that goody-goody business.

BEATRICE [*faintly*]. Please——

ALAN. You don't care for me a bit.

BEATRICE [*passionately*]. Alan! You don't know what it's costing me.

[ALAN looks at her keenly, and then seizes her violently and kisses her several times. She yields to him and returns his embrace.]

ALAN [*speaking quickly and excitedly*]. Bee, you're talking nonsense. You can't give me up—you can't give me up, however much you try.

[BEATRICE tears herself away from him.]

BEATRICE. You don't know me. I can. I will. I shall never be your wife.

ALAN. I won't take that for an answer—
Bee——

BEATRICE. No, no, no! Never, never! whilst Fanny Hawthorn has a better right to you than I have.

[There is a long pause. At length comes a knock at the door.]

ALAN. Hello!

[JEFFCOTE puts his head inside.]

JEFFCOTE. Nine o'clock.

ALAN. What of it?

JEFFCOTE. Hawthorns are due up here at nine.

ALAN *[shortly]*. Oh!

BEATRICE. Is my father there?

JEFFCOTE. Ay! *[Calling]* Tim!

[SIR TIMOTHY appears in the doorway.]

SIR TIMOTHY. Well? Fixed it up, eh?

BEATRICE. Alan and I are not going to be married, father.

[There is a pause.]

JEFFCOTE. Ah!

SIR TIMOTHY. I'm sure it's all for the best, lass.

BEATRICE. Are you quite ready, father? I want you to take me home.

SIR TIMOTHY. Ay—ay! Shall I get thee a cab, Bee?

BEATRICE. I'd rather walk, please. *[BEATRICE goes to the door.]* I'll write to you, Alan.

[She goes out, followed by SIR TIMOTHY.]

JEFFCOTE. So you've thought better of it?

ALAN. Seems so.

JEFFCOTE. And you'll wed Fanny Hawthorn, I take it?

ALAN [*laconically*]. Ay!

JEFFCOTE. Thou'rt a good lad, Alan. I'm right pleased with thee.

[ALAN bursts into a loud peal of mirthless laughter.

[JEFFCOTE stares at ALAN in surprise.

JEFFCOTE. What's the matter?

ALAN. Nothing, father.

[*He flings himself listlessly into an arm-chair. JEFFCOTE, after another look at him, scratches his head and goes out.*

THE CURTAIN FALLS

ACT III

The scene is the same as in the previous Act, the time a few minutes later. The room is empty. ADA opens the door and shows in MRS. HAWTHORN, CHRISTOPHER, and FANNY, who file in silently and awkwardly. Instead of a hat, FANNY is wearing the shawl that Lancashire weavers commonly wear when going to the Mill.

ADA [*glancing back at them from the door*]. Will you take a seat, please.

[ADA goes out. CHRISTOPHER and MRS. HAWTHORN sit on chairs placed against the back wall. FANNY remains standing.]

MRS. HAWTHORN. Fanny, sit you down.

[FANNY silently seats herself. They are all three in a row along the back wall, very stiff and awkward.]

[Presently JEFFCOTE enters. The HAWTHORNS all rise. He greets the three drily.]

JEFFCOTE [*nodding*]. Evening, Chris. [To MRS. HAWTHORN.] Good evening. [He stops in front of FANNY.] Good evening, lass.

[He eyes her from tip to toe with a searching stare. She returns it quite simply and boldly.]

JEFFCOTE [*satisfied*]. Ay!

[*He turns away to the hearth, where he takes his stand just as MRS. JEFFCOTE comes in. She is stiff and ill at ease.*]

MRS. JEFFCOTE [*to them all without looking at them*].
Good evening.

[MRS. HAWTHORN and CHRISTOPHER murmur a greeting, and MRS. JEFFCOTE passes on to the fire, having cut them as nearly as she dared. ALAN lounges in sheepishly. He does not say anything, but nods to the three in a subdued way, and sits down sullenly on the L., far away from his father and mother.]

JEFFCOTE [*to the HAWTHORNS*]. Sit down.

[*They are about to sit against the wall as before, but he stops them.*]

JEFFCOTE. Not there. Draw up to the table.

[*They seat themselves round the table. The disposition of the characters is as follows. On the extreme L. is ALAN, in a big arm-chair. Sitting on the left of the table is FANNY. Behind the table, MRS. HAWTHORN. On the right of the table, CHRISTOPHER. Further to the right, in an arm-chair near the hearth, is MRS. JEFFCOTE. As for JEFFCOTE, he stands up with his*]

back to the empty fireplace. Thus he can dominate the scene and walk about if he feels inclined.

JEFFCOTE. Well, here we are, all of us. We know what's brought us together. It's not a nice job, but it's got to be gone through, so we may as well get to business right away.

CHRISTOPHER. Ay!

JEFFCOTE. We don't need to say owt about what's happened, do we?

MRS. HAWTHORN. No, I don't see as we need.

MRS. JEFFCOTE. Excuse me. I think we do. I know hardly anything of what has happened.

MRS. HAWTHORN. It's admitted by them both.

MRS. JEFFCOTE. But what is admitted by them both? It's rather important to know that.

MRS. HAWTHORN. You're hoping that we won't be able to prove owt against Alan. You think that happen he'll be able to wriggle out of it.

JEFFCOTE. There'll be no wriggling out. Alan has got to pay what he owes, and I don't think there's any doubt what that is. It's true I've only heard his version. What's Fanny told you?

CHRISTOPHER. Nowt.

JEFFCOTE. Nowt?

CHRISTOPHER. Nowt.

JEFFCOTE. How's that?

MRS. HAWTHORN. She's turned stupid, that's why.

JEFFCOTE. I'll have to have a go at her, then. [To FANNY.] It seems my lad met you one night in Black-pool and asked you to go to Llandudno with him?

FANNY. Yes. What then?

JEFFCOTE. He was drunk?

FANNY. No. He wasn't what you'd call drunk.

JEFFCOTE. As near as makes no matter, I'll bet.

FANNY. Anyhow, he was sober enough next morning when we went away.

JEFFCOTE. And where did you stay at Llandudno? Did he take you to an hotel?

[FANNY *does not reply*.

MRS. HAWTHORN [*sharply*]. Now then, Fanny.

JEFFCOTE. Come lass, open thy mouth.

ALAN. All right, father. I'll answer for Fanny. We stopped at St. Elvies Hotel, Saturday till Monday.

JEFFCOTE. What did you stop as?

ALAN. Man and wife.

MRS. HAWTHORN [*gratified*]. Ah!

ALAN. You'll find it in the register if you go there and look it up.

JEFFCOTE [*to MRS. JEFFCOTE*]. There. Are you satisfied?

MRS. JEFFCOTE. Quite, thank you, Nat. That was all I wanted to know. I didn't want there to be any mistake.

CHRISTOPHER. There's one thing bothering me. That postcard. It was posted in Blackpool on Sunday. I don't see how you managed it if you left on Saturday.

FANNY. I wrote it beforehand and left it for Mary to post on Sunday morning.

MRS. HAWTHORN. So Mary was in at all this!

FANNY. If Mary hadn't been drowned you'd never have found out about it. I'd never have opened my mouth, and Alan knows that.

MRS. HAWTHORN. Well, Mary's got her reward, poor lass!

CHRISTOPHER. There's more in this than chance, it seems to me.

MRS. HAWTHORN. The ways of the Lord are mysterious and wonderful. We can't pretend to understand them. He used Mary as an instrument for His purpose.

JEFFCOTE. Happen. But if He did it seems cruel hard on Mary, like. However, it's all over and done with, and can't be mended now, worse luck! These two young ones have made fools of themselves. That don't matter so much. The worst feature of it is they've made a fool of me. We've got to decide what's to be done. [*To MRS. HAWTHORN*] I gave Chris a message for you last night.

MRS. HAWTHORN. Yes, you said as how you'd see us treated right.

JEFFCOTE. That's it. That's what I'm going to do. Now what do you reckon is the right way to settle this job?

MRS. HAWTHORN. He ought to marry her. I'll never be satisfied with owt less.

JEFFCOTE. That's your idea, too, Chris?

CHRISTOPHER. Ay!

JEFFCOTE. It's mine as well. [*MRS. HAWTHORN nods eagerly.*] Before I knew who the chap was I said he should wed her, and I'm not going back on that

now I find he's my own son. The missus there doesn't see it in the same light, but she'll have to make the best of it. She's in a minority of one, as they say.

MRS. HAWTHORN. Then we may take it that Alan's agreeable?

JEFFCOTE. Whether he's agreeable or not I cannot say. He's willing, and that'll have to be enough for you.

MRS. HAWTHORN. You'll excuse me mentioning it, but what about the other girl?

JEFFCOTE. What other girl? Has he been carrying on with another one as well?

MRS. JEFFCOTE. She means Beatrice. Alan was engaged to Miss Farrar.

MRS. HAWTHORN. Yes, that's it. What about her?

JEFFCOTE. That's off now. No need to talk of that.

CHRISTOPHER. The lad's no longer engaged to her?

MRS. JEFFCOTE. No.

MRS. HAWTHORN. And he's quite free to wed our Fanny?

JEFFCOTE. He is so far as we know.

MRS. HAWTHORN. Then the sooner it's done the better.

JEFFCOTE. We've only to get the licence.

CHRISTOPHER [*brokenly*]. I'm sure—I'm sure—we're very grateful.

MRS. HAWTHORN [*wiping her eyes*]. Yes, we are indeed. Though, of course, it's only what we'd a right to expect.

CHRISTOPHER. I'm sure, Mrs. Jeffcote, that you'll try and look on Fanny more kindly in time.

MRS. JEFFCOTE. I hope I shall, Mr. Hawthorn.

Perhaps it's all for the best. More unlikely matches have turned out all right in the end.

MRS. HAWTHORN. I'm sure there's nothing can be said against Fanny save that she's got a will of her own. And after all, there's a many of us have that.

CHRISTOPHER. She's always been a good girl up to now. You can put trust in her, Alan.

JEFFCOTE. It's evidently high time Alan got wed, that's all I can say, and it may as well be to Fanny as to anyone else. She's had to work at the loom for her living, and that does no woman any harm. My missus has worked at the loom in her time, though you'd never think it to look at her now, and if Fanny turns out half as good as her, Alan won't have done so badly. Now we've got to settle when the wedding's to be.

MRS. JEFFCOTE. What *sort* of wedding is it to be?

JEFFCOTE. You women had better fix that up.

MRS. JEFFCOTE. It ought to be quiet.

JEFFCOTE. It'll be quiet, you may lay your shirt on that! We shan't hold a reception at the Town Hall this journey.

MRS. JEFFCOTE. I should prefer it to take place at the Registrar's.

MRS. HAWTHORN. No. I'll never agree to that. Not on any account.

MRS. JEFFCOTE. Why not?

MRS. HAWTHORN. No. In church, if you please, with the banns and everything. There's been enough irregular work about this job already. We'll have it done properly this time.

ALAN. I should like to hear what Fanny says.

MRS. HAWTHORN. Fanny'll do what's thought best for her.

ALAN. Anyhow, we'll hear what she thinks about it, if you please.

FANNY. I was just wondering where I come in.

MRS. HAWTHORN. Where you come in? You're a nice one to talk! You'd have been in a fine mess, happen, if you hadn't had us to look after you. You ought to be very thankful to us all, instead of sitting there hard like.

JEFFCOTE. You'd better leave it to us, lass. We'll settle this job for you.

FANNY. It's very good of you. You'll hire the parson and get the licence and make all the arrangements on your own without consulting me, and I shall have nothing to do save turn up meek as a lamb at the church or registry office or whatever it is.

JEFFCOTE. That's about all you'll be required to do.

FANNY. You'll look rather foolish if that's just what I won't do.

MRS. HAWTHORN. Don't talk silly, Fanny.

JEFFCOTE. What does she mean by that?

MRS. HAWTHORN. Nothing. She's only showing off, like. Don't heed her.

MRS. JEFFCOTE. I beg your pardon. We will heed her, if you please. We'll see what it is she means by that.

JEFFCOTE. Hark you, lass. I'm having no hanky-panky work now. You'll have to do what you're bid, or maybe you'll find yourself in the cart.

CHRISTOPHER. Fanny, you'll not turn stupid now?

FANNY. It doesn't suit me to let you settle my affairs without so much as consulting me.

MRS. HAWTHORN. Consulting you! What is there to consult you about, I'd like to know? You want to marry Alan, I suppose, and all we're talking about is the best way to bring it about.

FANNY. That's just where you make the mistake. I don't want to marry Alan.

JEFFCOTE. Eh?

FANNY. And what's more, I haven't the least intention of marrying him.

MRS. HAWTHORN. She's taken leave of her senses!

[They are all surprised. ALAN is puzzled. MRS. JEFFCOTE visibly brightens.]

JEFFCOTE. Now then, what the devil do you mean by that?

FANNY. I mean what I say, and I'll trouble you to talk to me without swearing at me. I'm not one of the family yet.

JEFFCOTE. Well, I'm hanged!

[He is much more polite to FANNY after this, for she has impressed him. But now he rubs his head and looks round queerly at the others.]

CHRISTOPHER. Why won't you wed him? Have you got summat against him?

FANNY. That's my affair.

MRS. HAWTHORN. But you must give us a reason.

[FANNY remains obstinately silent.]

CHRISTOPHER. It's no good talking to her when she's in this mood. I know her better than you do. She won't open her mouth, no, not if she was going to be hung.

JEFFCOTE. Dost thou mean to tell me that all us folk are to stand here and let this girl beat us?

CHRISTOPHER. Fanny'll get her own way.

JEFFCOTE. We'll see.

MRS. JEFFCOTE. Why shouldn't she have her own way? I don't think we have any right to press her; I don't really.

MRS. HAWTHORN. All you're after is to get Alan out of the hole he's in. You don't care about Fanny.

MRS. JEFFCOTE. I'm sorry for Fanny, but of course I care more about my own child.

MRS. HAWTHORN. Well, and so do we.

MRS. JEFFCOTE. After all, she knows better than we do whether she wants to marry Alan.

JEFFCOTE. Now then, Alan, what's the meaning of this?

ALAN. I don't know, father.

JEFFCOTE. You've not been getting at her to-day and wheedling her into this?

ALAN. Good Lord, no! What would have been the good of that? Besides I never thought of it.

JEFFCOTE. Well, *I* can't account for it!

ALAN. Look here, father, just let me have a talk to her alone. It's not likely she'll care to speak with all you folk sitting round.

JEFFCOTE. Do you reckon she'll open her mouth to you?

ALAN. I can but try, though it's true she never takes much notice of what I say.

JEFFCOTE. We'll give you fifteen minutes. [*He looks at his watch.*] If thou cannot talk a lass round in that time thou ought to be jolly well ashamed of thyself. I know I could have done it when I was thy age. Mother, you'd better show Chris and his missus into t'other room for a bit.

[*MRS. JEFFCOTE goes to the door.*]

MRS. JEFFCOTE. Will you come this way, please?

[*MRS. JEFFCOTE goes out, followed by CHRISTOPHER.*]

MRS. HAWTHORN. Now, Fanny, think on what you're doing. For God's sake, have a bit of common sense!

[*FANNY is silent. MRS. HAWTHORN goes out.*]

JEFFCOTE. Fifteen minutes. And if you're not done then we shall come in whether or not.

[*JEFFCOTE goes out.*]

ALAN. Look here, Fanny, what's all this nonsense about?

FANNY. What nonsense?

ALAN. Why won't you marry me? My father's serious enough. He means it when he says he wants you to. He's as stupid as a mule when he once gets an idea into his head.

FANNY. As if I didn't know that. He's like you, for that matter!

ALAN. Well, then, what are you afraid of?

FANNY. Afraid? Who says I am afraid?

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ALAN. I don't see what else it can be.

FANNY. You can't understand a girl not jumping at you when she gets the chance, can you?

ALAN. I can't understand you not taking me when you get the chance.

FANNY. How is it you aren't going to marry Beatrice Farrar?

ALAN. I can't marry both of you.

FANNY. Weren't you fond of her?

ALAN. Very.

FANNY. But you were fonder of me—Eh?

ALAN. Well——

FANNY. Come now, you must have been or you wouldn't have given her up for me.

ALAN. I gave her up because my father made me.

FANNY. Made you? Good Lord, a chap of your age!

ALAN. My father's a man who will have his own way.

FANNY. You can tell him to go and hang himself. He hasn't got any hold over you.

ALAN. That's just what he has. He can keep me short of brass.

FANNY. Earn some brass.

ALAN. Ay! I can earn some brass, but it'll mean hard work and it'll take time. And, after all, I shan't earn anything like what I get now.

FANNY. Then all you want to wed me for is what you'll get with me? I'm to be given away with a pound of tea, as it were?

ALAN. No. You know I like you, Fanny—I'm fond of you.

FANNY. You didn't give up Beatrice Farrar because of me, but because of the money.

ALAN. If it comes to that, I didn't really give her up at all. I may as well be straight with you. It was she that gave me up.

FANNY. What did she do that for? Her father's plenty of money, and she can get round *him*, I'll bet, if you can't get round *yours*.

ALAN. She gave me up because she thought it was her duty to.

FANNY. You mean because she didn't fancy my leavings.

ALAN. No. Because she thought you had the right to marry me.

FANNY. Glory! She must be queer!

ALAN. It was jolly fine of her. You ought to be the first to see that.

FANNY. Fine to give you up? [*She shrugs her shoulders, and then admits grudgingly*] Well, I reckon it was a sacrifice of a sort. That is, if she loves you. If I loved a chap I wouldn't do that.

ALAN. You would. You're doing it now.

FANNY. Eh?

ALAN. Women are more unselfish than men and no mistake!

FANNY. What are you getting at?

ALAN. I know why you won't marry me.

FANNY. Do you? [*She smiles.*] Well, spit it out, lad!

ALAN. You're doing it for my sake.

FANNY. How do you make that out?

ALAN. You don't want to spoil my life.

FANNY. Thanks! Much obliged for the compliment.

ALAN. I'm not intending to say anything unkind, but of course it's as clear as daylight that you'd damage my prospects, and all that sort of thing. You can see that, can't you?

FANNY. Ay! I can see it now you point it out. I hadn't thought of it before.

ALAN. Then, that isn't why you refused me?

FANNY. Sorry to disappoint you, but it's not.

ALAN. I didn't see what else it could be.

FANNY. Don't you kid yourself, my lad! It isn't because I'm afraid of spoiling *your* life that I'm refusing you, but because I'm afraid of spoiling *mine*! That didn't occur to you?

ALAN. It didn't.

FANNY. You never thought that anybody else could be as selfish as yourself.

ALAN. I may be very conceited, but I don't see how you can hurt yourself by wedding me. You'd come in for plenty of brass, anyhow.

FANNY. I don't know as money's much to go by when it comes to a job of this sort. It's more important to get the right chap.

ALAN. You like me well enough?

FANNY. Suppose it didn't last? Weddings brought about this road have a knack of turning out badly. Would you ever forget it was your father bade you

marry me? No fear! You'd bear me a grudge all my life for that.

ALAN. Hang it! I'm not such a cad as you make out.

FANNY. You wouldn't be able to help it. It mostly happens that road. Look at old Mrs. Eastwood—hers was a case like ours. Old Joe Eastwood's father made them wed. And she's been separated from him these thirty years, living all alone in that big house at Valley Edge. Got any amount of brass, she has, but she's so lonesome-like she does her own housework for the sake of something to occupy her time. 'The tradesfolk catch her washing the front steps. You don't find me making a mess of my life like that.

ALAN. Look here, Fanny, I promise you I'll treat you fair all the time. You don't need to fear that folk'll look down on you. We shall have too much money for that.

FANNY. I can manage all right on twenty-five bob a week.

ALAN. Happen you can. It's not the brass altogether. You do like me, as well, don't you?

FANNY. Have you only just thought of that part of the bargain?

ALAN. Don't be silly. I thought of it long ago. You *do* like me? You wouldn't have gone to Llandudno with me if you hadn't liked me?

FANNY. Oh! yes, I liked you.

ALAN. And don't you like me now?

FANNY. You're a nice, clean, well-made lad. Oh, ay! I like you right enough.

ALAN. Then, Fanny, for God's sake, marry me, and let's get this job settled.

FANNY. Not me!

ALAN. But you must. Don't you see it's your duty to.

FANNY. Oh! come now, *you* aren't going to start preaching to me?

ALAN. No. I don't mean duty in the way Beatrice did. I mean your duty to me. You've got me into a hole, and it's only fair you should get me out.

FANNY. I like your cheek!

ALAN. But just look here. I'm going to fall between two stools. It's all up with Beatrice, of course. And if you won't have me I shall have parted from her to no purpose; besides getting kicked out of the house by my father, more than likely!

FANNY. Nay, nay! He'll not punish you for this. He doesn't know it's your fault I'm not willing to wed you.

ALAN. He may. It's not fair, but it would be father all over to do that.

FANNY. He'll be only too pleased to get shut of me without eating his own words. He'll forgive you on the spot, and you can make it up with Beatrice to-morrow.

ALAN. I can never make it up with Bee!

FANNY. Get away!

ALAN. You won't understand a girl like Bee. I couldn't think of even trying for months, and then it

may be too late. I'm not the only pebble on the beach. And I'm a damaged one, at that!

FANNY. She's fond of you, you said?

ALAN. Yes. I think she's very fond of me.

FANNY. Then she'll make it up in a fortnight.

ALAN [*moodily*]. You said *you* were fond of me once, but it hasn't taken you long to alter.

FANNY. All women aren't built alike. Beatrice is religious. She'll be sorry for you. I was fond of you in a way.

ALAN. But you didn't ever really love me?

FANNY. Love you? Good heavens, of course not! Why on earth should I love you? You were just someone to have a bit of fun with. You were an amusement—a lark.

ALAN [*shocked*]. Fanny! Is that all you cared for me?

FANNY. How much more did you care for me?

ALAN. But it's not the same. I'm a man.

FANNY. You're a man, and I was your little fancy. Well, I'm a woman, and *you* were *my* little fancy. You wouldn't prevent a woman enjoying herself as well as a man, if she takes it into her head?

ALAN. But do you mean to say that you didn't care any more for me than a fellow cares for any girl he happens to pick up?

FANNY. Yes. Are you shocked?

ALAN. It's a bit thick; it is really!

FANNY. You're a beauty to talk!

ALAN. It sounds so jolly immoral. I never thought of a girl looking on a chap just like that! I made sure you wanted to marry me if you got the chance.

FANNY. No fear! You're not good enough for me. The chap Fanny Hawthorn weds has got to be made of different stuff from you, my lad. *My* husband, if ever I have one, will be a man, not a fellow who'll throw over his girl at his father's bidding! Strikes me the sons of these rich manufacturers are all much alike. They seem a bit weak in the upper storey. It's their fathers' brass that's too much for them, happen! They don't know how to spend it properly. They're like chaps who can't carry their drink because they aren't used to it. The brass gets into their heads, like!

ALAN. Hang it, Fanny, I'm not quite a fool.

FANNY. No. You're not a fool altogether. But there's summat lacking. You're not man enough for me. You're a nice lad, and I'm fond of you. But I couldn't ever marry you. We've had a right good time together, I'll never forget that. It *has* been a right good time, and no mistake! We've enjoyed ourselves proper! But all good times have to come to an end, and ours is over now. Come along, now, and bid me farewell.

ALAN. I can't make you out rightly, Fanny, but you're a damn good sort, and I wish there were more like you!

FANNY [*holding out her hand*]. Good-bye, old lad.

ALAN [*grasping her hand*]. Good-bye, Fanny! And good luck!

[*A slight pause.*]

FANNY. And now call them in again.

ALAN [*looking at his watch*]. Time's not up yet.

FANNY. Never heed ! Let's get it over.

[ALAN goes out, and FANNY returns to her chair and sits down. Presently ALAN comes in and stands by the door, whilst MRS. JEFFCOTE, MRS. HAWTHORN, and CHRISTOPHER file in and resume their original positions. Last of all comes JEFFCOTE, and ALAN leaves the door and goes back to his chair. JEFFCOTE comes straight behind the table.

JEFFCOTE. Well ? What's it to be ?

[ALAN and FANNY look at each other.

Come. What's it to be ? You, Fanny, have you come to your senses ?

FANNY. I've never left them, so far as I know.

JEFFCOTE. Are you going to wed our Alan or are you not ?

FANNY. I'm not.

JEFFCOTE. Ah !

MRS. HAWTHORN. Well !

ALAN. It's no good, father. I can't help it. I've done all I can. She won't have me.

JEFFCOTE. I'm beat this time ! I wash my hands of it ! There's no fathoming a woman. And these are the creatures that want us to give them votes !

[After this JEFFCOTE does not attempt to influence the discussion.

MRS. HAWTHORN [in a shrill voice]. Do you tell us you're throwing away a chance like this ?

FANNY. You've heard.

MRS. HAWTHORN. I call it wicked, I do, indeed! I can see you are downright bad, through and through! There's one thing I tell you straight. Our house is no place for thee after this.

FANNY. You're not really angry with me because of what I've done. It's because I'm not going to have any of Mr. Jeffcote's money that you want to turn me out of the house.

MRS. HAWTHORN. It's not! It's because you choose to be a girl who's lost her reputation, instead of letting Alan make you into an honest woman.

FANNY. How can he do that?

MRS. HAWTHORN. By wedding you, of course.

FANNY. You called him a blackguard this morning.

MRS. HAWTHORN. So he is a blackguard.

FANNY. I don't see how marrying a blackguard is going to turn me into an honest woman!

MRS. HAWTHORN. If he marries you he won't be a blackguard any longer.

FANNY. Then it looks as if I'm asked to wed him to turn him into an honest man?

ALAN. It's no use bandying words about what's over and done with. I want to know what's all this talk of turning Fanny out of doors?

CHRISTOPHER. Take no heed of it! My missus don't rightly know what she's saying just now.

MRS. HAWTHORN. Don't she? You're making a big mistake if you think that. Fanny can go home and fetch her things, and after that she may pack off!

CHRISTOPHER. That she'll not!

MRS. HAWTHORN. Then I'll make it so hot for her in the house, and for thee, too, that thou'll be glad to see the back of her!

FANNY. This hasn't got anything to do with Mr. and Mrs. Jeffcote, has it?

[FANNY rises.

ALAN. It's got something to do with me, though! I'm not going to see you without a home.

FANNY [*smiling*]. It's right good of you, Alan, but I shan't starve. I'm not without a trade at my finger tips, thou knows. I'm a Lancashire lass, and so long as there's weaving sheds in Lancashire I shall earn enough brass to keep me going. I wouldn't live at home again after this, not anyhow! I'm going to be on my own in future. [*To CHRISTOPHER*] You've no call to be afraid. I'm not going to disgrace you. But so long as I've to live my own life I don't see why I shouldn't choose what it's to be.

CHRISTOPHER [*rising*]. We're in the road here! Come, Sarah!

JEFFCOTE. I'm sorry, Chris. I've done my best for thee.

CHRISTOPHER. Ay! I know. I'm grateful to thee, Nat. [*To MRS. JEFFCOTE*] Good-night, ma'am.

MRS. JEFFCOTE. Good-night.

[MRS. HAWTHORN and CHRISTOPHER go out, the former seething with suppressed resentment. Neither says anything to ALAN. JEFFCOTE opens the door for them and follows them

into the hall. As FANNY is going out MRS. JEFFCOTE speaks.

MRS. JEFFCOTE. Good-bye, Fanny Hawthorn. If ever you want help, come to me.

FANNY. Ah! You didn't want us to wed?

MRS. JEFFCOTE. No.

FANNY. You were straight enough.

MRS. JEFFCOTE. I'm sure this is the best way out. I couldn't see any hope the other way.

FANNY. Good-bye.

[MRS. JEFFCOTE holds out her hand, and they shake hands. Then FANNY goes out with ALAN. There is a slight pause. MRS. JEFFCOTE goes to the door and looks into the hall, and then returns to her chair. Soon JEFFCOTE comes in.]

MRS. JEFFCOTE. Have they gone?

JEFFCOTE. Ay!

[JEFFCOTE sits down in an arm-chair and fills his pipe.]

MRS. JEFFCOTE. Where's Alan?

JEFFCOTE. Don't know.

MRS. JEFFCOTE. What are you going to do about him?

JEFFCOTE. Don't know.

[ALAN opens the door and looks in. He is wearing a light burberry mackintosh and a soft felt hat.]

MRS. JEFFCOTE. Where are you going to, Alan?

ALAN. I'm just running round to Farrar's.

JEFFCOTE [*surprised*]. To Farrar's?

ALAN. To see Beatrice.

MRS. JEFFCOTE [*not surprised*]. You're going to ask her to marry you?

ALAN [*laconically*]. Happen I am!

JEFFCOTE. Well, I'm damned! Dost thou reckon she'll have thee?

ALAN. That remains to be seen.

JEFFCOTE. Aren't you reckoning without me?

ALAN. Can't help that.

[JEFFCOTE *grunts*.

ALAN. Hang it! be fair. I've done my best. It's not my fault that Fanny won't have me.

JEFFCOTE. Well, if Beatrice Farrar can fancy thee, it's not for me to be too particular.

ALAN. Thank you, father.

JEFFCOTE. Get along! I'm disgusted with thee!

[ALAN *slips out of the door*.

MRS. JEFFCOTE. Beatrice will have him.

JEFFCOTE. How do you know that?

MRS. JEFFCOTE. She loves him; she told me.

JEFFCOTE. There's no accounting for tastes! [*He ruminates.*] So Beatrice loves him, does she? Eh! but women are queer folk! Who'd have thought that Fanny would refuse to wed him?

MRS. JEFFCOTE. It *is* strange. It makes you feel there *is* something in Providence after all.

THE CURTAIN FALLS

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